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ALL who are concerned with modern philosophic trends will be interested in this appraisal of the new realism from the point of view of traditional realism or scholasticism. Its exposition of the new realism is fair and objective and gives a comprehensive idea of that system. Its criticism is penetrating and representative of the best neo-scholastic viewpoint.

The prediction can safely be made that this work will be read by all Catholic teachers of philosophy and that they will recommend their students to read it.

Perhaps the full justice which is done by an opponent to the men of this school of the new realism may lead them to repair their neglect hitherto by subjecting the neo-scholastic system to the close study that will enable them in turn to do it full justice.

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NEW REALISM IN THE LIGHT  
OF SCHOLASTICISM



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TORONTO

# New Realism in the Light of Scholasticism

BY  
SISTER MARY VERDA, PH.D.

OF THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY CROSS  
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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER AND MOTHER



## PREFACE

To say that contemporary non-Scholastic philosophical thought is so chaotic as to be little more than a maze of conflicting opinions is but to call attention to a fact frankly recognized and as frankly regretted by many of its ablest students. "Let any professional philosopher," writes Professor Sheldon, "be asked to name *one* doctrine that is by his compeers generally accepted. If he is disingenuous enough to name one, it will be found that others name a different one."<sup>1</sup> The fact is that there is no such thing as a *system* of modern philosophy at all, but merely a large variety of individualistic and severally antagonistic views on philosophy. Idealism which for so long held well nigh undisputed sway in the United States, and its later serious rival, Pragmatism, have lost, for the most part, the cogency of their former appeal to their respective followers and have fallen victims to the independent criticisms of writers, as many of whom perhaps were formerly within their ranks as of those who had always remained outside. At the International Conference of Philosophy held at Oxford, England, in 1920, it was brought out that both Idealism and Pragmatism were, in our own country at least, steadily giving way to New Realism or New Ration-

<sup>1</sup> *Strife of Systems and Productive Duality*, p. 25.



alism. The strength of the appeal of New Realism lay precisely in this, that it held or seemed to hold out a well-founded hope of discovering an effective method of rescuing philosophy both from the arbitrary subjectivism of Idealism on the one hand, and from the exaggerated "practicality" and consequent relativism of Pragmatism on the other. The New Realists felt, and rightly, that if ever there was to be a philosophy which could achieve something of the objective truth and real certainty of science, this could only be by a return to the common sense view of the unquestioned reality of an external world unmodified, and still less unproduced, by the knowing process. In this volume the reader will find set forth the historical background of New Realism, a summary statement and analysis of its basic principles, and an evaluation of those principles by the standards of the traditional dualistic realism or Scholasticism.

The New Realists themselves modestly characterize their theories as a tendency towards a system of philosophy rather than as a system itself. Being tentative, their ideas cannot but be clarified, and, mayhap, rectified, by being compared with the principles of that system of philosophy which, however it may be criticized, is generally allowed the merit of being everywhere definite, coherent, and consistent with the common judgments of mankind. This comparative study Sister Mary Verda has made, and made well. Bringing to her subject a clear and comprehensive grasp of Scholastic Philosophy, she has been able to reduce to orderly arrangement the main tenets of New Realism, to elucidate their con-

tent, to point out their chief implications, and then to show, by reference to solid criteria of judgment both the beneficial as well as the illogical and dangerous elements in the new movement. By having shown that in its present form "New Realism" is merely a euphemistic title for New Materialism, and that as a philosophy it must be classified with Materialistic Monism, Sister Mary Verda has rendered a distinct service to such of our students of contemporary thought as might otherwise perhaps be misled by its superficial appearance of harmlessness and constructive value.

Charles C. Miltner, C.S.C., Ph.D.

University of Notre Dame,  
September 24, 1925.





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# NEW REALISM

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### HISTORICAL SURVEY OF KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM

Are our cognitive faculties trustworthy? Do our senses reveal to us a real, material universe distinct from our minds? Is there anything in reality that corresponds to our ideas? Is any of our knowledge true? Or, to put it concretely, When an object, such as a flower, is perceived by the eye, the organ of the sense of sight, does it represent the flower truly? Does it reveal to one the flower as it is in itself? Is there an object in the external world which corresponds to the idea "flower"? Is the judgment, "This flower is a lily," true? What grounds are there for saying that it is true? All of these and similar questions are considered by those to whom philosophical thought is unfamiliar as not only useless but ridiculous, for the suppositions whence they spring have never occurred to their minds. Furthermore, does not their experience reveal to them that they have not only knowledge but a true knowledge of things? They admit, of course, that at times they have had

to modify certain convictions when some new experience revealed to them facts previously unnoticed. But to doubt that they had faculties which could bring them into direct and true cognitive relation with the world of reality, and that their knowledge was true, they would consider contrary to plain common sense. Can they not prove to themselves by touching persons and things about them that knowledge of their existence is certain? Surely a man's home, his wife and children, his friends, the instruments used in his trade, the scenes and events that he has observed,—all these are to him facts whose objective reality needs no proof, and whose existence is distinct from his perception of them. For the unreflecting man, therefore, the problem of knowledge is no problem, and why it should be raised at all is beyond his comprehension. But that such a problem does exist to-day, and has existed from earliest times, the student of Philosophical History is well aware; and a study of the current solution of that problem reveals a peculiarly strong tendency toward a return to Realism, to the philosophical system which bases its solutions on a careful study of the facts which the everyday man, the man of common sense, may easily be made to understand.

A brief survey of the general historical development of the philosophy of this problem will be helpful. And it may be well first to clear up certain concepts connected with it. What is knowing? How is an object known? What do we mean when we say we know an object? The Scholastic writers answer: An object is known when it is present in a certain way in the knowing consciousness. There

must be a union between the knowable object and the knowing subject; for "There are but three requisites for knowledge, namely, the active power of the knower by which he judges of a thing, the thing known, and the union of both."<sup>1</sup> To know the flower before me, the flower must be in me, not according to the mode of being it has in the external world, but "according to the mode of being of me, the knowing subject." The flower must produce in me a reflection as it were of itself. Since all knowledge results from a similitude of the thing known in the subject knowing, the latter is enriched by "something which belongs to something else." It is this characteristic that differentiates knowing beings from non-knowing beings; "non-knowing beings have only their own reality, but knowing beings are capable of possessing also the reality of something else. For in the knowing being there is a presence of the thing known produced by this thing."<sup>2</sup> In what this presence or reflection of the object in me consists, or what the nature of this assimilation is, and how it is brought about forms the psychological problem of knowledge for the Scholastic. The epistemological problem centers on the capacity of the human mind for objective knowledge and the objective value of knowledge.

Having no suspicion of the part played by the subject in the acquisition of knowledge, because ignorant of the psychology of the knowing subject, the pre-Socratic philosophers explained sensation as merely a contact of similar elements. In the sixth

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 14, Art. 1.

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 2, Art. 1.

century before Christ, Heraclitus, the Obscure, gave a negative answer to the question: Is any of our knowledge true? "Eyes and ears," he said, "are bad witnesses to men, if they have souls that understand not their language." He found the deceit caused by the senses and the error of the multitude to consist in the illusory appearance of the Being of permanent things which is presented to men by sense-perception. The Eleatic philosopher, Parmenides, on the contrary, failing to reconcile the manifoldness and changing character of reality with its unity, said: "Being is absolutely one; outside the unit of Being there is nothing. Consequently the supposed plurality of things, and the changes of things dependent on this plurality are mere appearances. . . .

"Being is, furthermore, nothing else than the thought in which it is known. The thought itself is Being. Being and the concept of Being are one. In this sense all Being is pregnant with reason, and reason permeates all things. . . .

"Truth belongs entirely to thought. As Being alone is thinkable, so also that alone which is thinkable and thought is Being. The senses do not bring us truth. They only deceive us, and it is precisely this deception of the senses which seduces men into the belief in, and the graceful tricks of speech about the multiplicity and the changes of things." \*

Empedocles (490 B. C.), a later exponent of Ionian philosophy, maintaining that "Like is known by like," considered the senses and their product, sense-knowledge, as untrustworthy. He explained the most elementary of our knowledge-processes,

\* Stöckl: *Handbook of History of Philosophy*, p. 54.

sensation, by supposing that detached particles from the external object enter into the various pores of the body and there unite with similar particles. The differences of sensation are explained by the differences of pores. The reason one sense cannot pick out the objects of another is due, he said, to the fact "that we perceive through effluences fitting into the pores of each sense. And that is why one sense cannot pick out the objects of another, for the pores of some are too wide and of others too narrow with reference to the object of sense, so that the effluences either go through untouched or are unable to enter at all." <sup>4</sup>

His contemporary, Anaxagoras (500 B. C.), directly opposed him in this. He taught that "perception is by opposites; for like is not affected by like. All sensation is accompanied by pain. This would seem to be the simple consequence of his presupposition; for the contact of unlike with unlike is in every case painful." <sup>5</sup> The senses, he alleged, are "weak but not deceitful"; their untrustworthiness being due to their "seeing" only part of what is in the object.

Agreeing with Empedocles, that "only like can act on like," the Atomists reduced all sensation to corporal contact, *i.e.* to touch, which is caused by the shock of the emanations. These small particles that go out from bodies retain *in parvo* the form of the body, their image, as it were. To Democritus sense-knowledge was obscure and not to be trusted. He,

<sup>4</sup> Theophrastus, *Phys. Opin.* 3 (Dox 478), Bakewell: *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Theophrastus, *De Sens*, 27 (Dox 507-8), Bakewell: *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, p. 54.



with the philosophers of this school, held the soul to be corporeal. This materialism culminated in the Sophism of Protagoras whose tenet, "Man is the measure of all things," was the forerunner of Kantian Criticism, despite the erroneous impression conveyed at times by some modern philosophers that the critical analysis of knowledge was first prepared by Descartes (1596-1659) and only dawned with the German Idealist Kant (1724-1804).

To the Sophist, Protagoras, Nothing is: all is becoming. Neither sensations nor sensible qualities have any proper reality; they exist only at the moment of contact with each other. Perception, he taught, is obviously distinct from the perceiving subject and from the object which calls it forth. Conditioned by both, it is yet different from both. Although perception is the completely adequate knowledge of what is perceived, it gives, however, no knowledge of the thing. Everyone knows things, not as they are, but as they are at the moment of perception for him, and for him only; and they are at this moment with reference to him such as he represents them to himself. Thus "man is the measure of all things." To later Sophists there was no actual contradiction, for since everyone talks about the content of his perception, contradictory assertions can never be made of the same object. Truth then to the Sophists was unattainable. In their teaching is found the earliest form of philosophical skepticism.

Realizing the gross and pernicious error into which the Sophists had fallen, Socrates desired to avoid this pitfall, and hence sought and found in a deeper



study of the mind itself a foundation and guarantee for true knowledge. By means of his Maieutic method, or intellectual midwifery as he described it, Socrates aimed to gain clear and accurate notions of things as they exist in order to attain thereby to objective truth. Of the imperfect or partial followers of Socrates, Aristippus, the founder of the Cyrenaic or Hedonist School, deserves mention. His theory of cognition was merely a further development of the subjectivism propounded in the Protagorean theory of cognition. He restricted all knowledge to sensation, but distinguished between the subjective affection which belongs to the sphere of our own consciousness, and the external object which produces this affection. We know that the object exists, but more than this we do not know. Neither have we any means of knowing whether the sensations of other men correspond with our own.

Plato, the greatest and most renowned of the pupils of Socrates, completed the theory of his master. He attempted to discover the objective correlative of the mind's innate knowledge; for knowledge to him was wholly independent of the senses, it was the pure action of the soul which existed in a more perfect state previous to its imprisonment in the body. In this anterior stage it had certain conceptions of eternal Truth. It is by transcending the sensible world and entering into the world of the Eternal, Unchangeable Ideas, which are at once principles of reality as well as of knowledge, that knowledge is acquired. It is only by looking into itself that the mind can discover these ideas. "As the blood," says a modern writer, "flows from the

heart to all parts of the body, and returns to the heart again, so in the Platonic philosophy everything proceeds from the Idea as from a centre, and everything returns thither again.”<sup>6</sup> Plato considered sense-knowledge to be nothing more than the perception of the shadows of things. The physical world not being real there is no real knowledge of it. How are we to ascertain the Truth if phenomena are not exact copies of the things-in-themselves? Plato answers: “Sensation awakens recollection and the recollection is truth; the Soul is confronted with the many by means of sense and by means of Reason it detects the One in the Many, *i.e.*, the particular things perceived by sense awaken the recollection of Universals or Ideas. But this recollection is always more or less imperfect.”<sup>7</sup> With the skeptics, he admitted the imperfection of all sense-knowledge; but though imperfect it is not worthless. It is no more like the truth than phenomena are like Ideas; but as phenomena are in some sort modeled after Ideas and do therefore, in some dim way, represent Ideas, so does sense-knowledge lead the patient thinker to something like the Truth; it awakens in him the reminiscences of the Truth.

The Stagyrte, Aristotle, characterized by his master Plato as “The mind of my school,” opposed the Ideal theory of his teacher. While he does not deny to concepts a subjective existence, he is completely opposed to their objective existence as universals. To Aristotle, however, the universal is not merely a purely notional entity; the thing repre-

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Stöckl's *History of Philosophy*, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Lewes: *Biographical History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 77.

sented in the concept is objectively real in the several individuals, for it is nothing else than the essence of these individuals. This essence is a product of thought only in so far as it is thought of as universal; it exists as an objective fact in many individuals and we conceive of it as universal, and unite under this common concept all the individuals of which the essence in question is predicable. Thus it is by a perfectly natural process that we go from the individual to the universal. The individuals alone exist and it is only by sensation that they can be known. As we have already seen, while some philosophers declared sense-knowledge to be deceitful, others maintained that it was perfectly faithful, as far as it went, but that it was incapable of penetrating beneath phenomena. Aristotle met the menacing attitude of skepticism by defending the statement that our senses are to be trusted though knowledge derived from them is not always correct. Sensation as sensation is true; but any affirmation one may make about the sensation may be either true or false according to the judgment.

We believe this rapid review of the outstanding exponents of the Pre-Socratic and Socratic periods of early Greek Philosophy sufficiently proves that the knowledge problem has its roots in the very beginnings of philosophic speculation, and justifies in great measure the prominent place accorded to it in later periods. In the doctrines of these early Greek master-minds we find the germs of all professed medieval and modern solutions of the knowledge problem. Idealism, Pragmatism, Realism, with their respective variations,—all these and more in

their earliest and crude beginnings can be unearthed in the teachings of these primitive philosophers.

Of what practical value, asks the everyday man, are the various solutions of the knowledge problem? What does it matter what theory of knowledge a man holds? Philosophical speculation has nothing to do with life and its activities, with the business of living. It does not teach us how to build our homes or till our fields or use our tools in the mechanical and in the industrial arts. No, not directly, perhaps, but the general principles which guide right thinking ultimately influence even our most practical work. If man's work in the world is to be done in a volitional and intelligent way and not in a mechanical and unintelligent fashion, if man is to understand the world in which he is working he must have an *attitude toward life*, and this is his philosophical theory. It is in accordance with this theory that he acts. Since it is true that the value of all knowledge is to be found only in the fact that it contributes ultimately to life, and is of no use purely in itself, surely philosophical knowledge can be no exception to the rule.

The singular importance of the knowledge problem in its bearing upon the individual must therefore be apparent. It will affect life in every department,—religious, moral, economic, domestic. No problem of a philosophical nature can be settled independently of knowledge theory. Of the many theories created by the genius of man to explain how man knows, a contemporary one, though supposedly simpler, is in fact among the more complex. It is the theory propounded by New Realism. After a brief

discussion of the most important theories of knowledge, it is the purpose of this work to present a somewhat more detailed and critical analysis of this contemporary theory of the knowledge problem,—and it shall be done chiefly in the light of Scholastic principles.

## CHAPTER II

### IDEALISM

As philosophy has developed, various solutions of the problem of knowledge have been submitted. The modern attitudes are but developments in varied terminology of older views. Since the aim of any theory of knowledge is to discover the nature of the relation between the apprehending mind and the apprehended object, the problem is necessarily three-fold. Any theory presented must account for the psychology of cognition, its metaphysical conditions, and epistemological value.

For the ingenuous, unreflecting person, as noted in the previous chapter, there is no knowledge problem. His theory, if his explanation may be called such, is the copy or photographic or mirroring theory. Never having studied Epistemology, he considers the act of knowing a very simple process. It is a resultant of the impression of an object on the sense, a mirroring of the perceived object. There being no intermediary, no transformation or distortion of either the knowing mind or the known object takes place; the object retaining its reality and the mind its passivity, there is no complex process but only a simple one. Were it not for the many contradictions in the experiences which observation reveals to the reflect-



ive mind, the plain man's copy theory might be provisionally accepted.

As soon, however, as we are confronted with errors, illusions, dreams, hallucinations, and hypnotism with its strange phenomena, the complexity of the knowledge process becomes evident. According as the philosopher regards knowledge as a function of the intellect, or as a function of the will, or as a result of the activity of both; according as he views the universe as one or many, the origin of knowledge as subjective or objective, the distinction between subject and object as relative or as absolute; according as he considers truth theoretical or practical, and its dependence on its power to satisfy the intellect or its power to satisfy the practical needs of our will or both, we have either Idealism with its species or Pragmatism or Realism with its species.

The Epistemologist realizes that any attempt to explain just how the universe, the non-ego—such as the flowers, the animals, little children, friends, and so forth—becomes present to his mind is an extremely difficult task. The idealist believes that by showing they are but phases of ourselves, we can escape all these difficulties. He “alleges that reality, considered as something complete by itself and apart from a mind that knows it, is full of insoluble puzzles and contradictions, but that these disappear when reality is treated as *not* something by itself, but solely for mind.”<sup>1</sup> The apparent but deceptive simplicity of Idealism's solution of the problem, that is, its dictum that everything perceived is but a modification of consciousness, and beyond such

<sup>1</sup> Sheldon: *Strife of Systems and Productive Duality*, p. 105.



modifications of consciousness there is nothing, may account for its large following. In the words of one of its exponents, “. . . a curious experience befell me. It was as if everything that had seemed to me external and around me were suddenly within me. The whole world seemed to be within me. It was within me that the trees waved their green branches, it was within me that the skylark was singing, it was within me that the hot sun shone, and the shade was cool. . . . I felt in all my being the delicious fragrance of the earth and the grass and the plants and the rich brown soil.”<sup>2</sup>

With the new idealists as with the old, the world is composed of knowing minds and their content, a thought expressed in these lines of Howison: “All existence is either (1) the existence of minds, or (2) the existence of the *items and order of their experience*; all the existences known as ‘material’ consisting in certain of these experiences, with an order organized by the self-active forms of consciousness that in their unity constitute the substantial being of a mind, in distinction from its phenomenal life.”<sup>3</sup> All thinkers agree that there must be some unity and meaning to things, and it is the philosophical quest for an explanation of this unity that has led the idealist to universalism, pantheism, and determinism. The willingness of the average person to admit this unity in the universe, and the existence of a universal mainspring back of it, is aptly expressed by the poet Thomas Hardy in “The Dynasts,”

<sup>2</sup> Reid: *Following Darkness*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Limits of Evolution*, 2d ed., pp. 12, 13.

"A Will that wills above the will of each  
Yet but the will of all conjunctively.

. . .

That shaken and unshaken are alike,  
But demonstrations from the Back of Things."

Idealism was a revolt against Naturalism and may be considered as a religious interpretation of nature, viewing the world under a form of knowledge with man, the finite individual, "regarded as a microcosmic representation of God, the Absolute Individual." <sup>4</sup> In this theory man is the center of all things. The nature of all things and their very existence are conditioned by their being known. In direct contradiction to facts, the idealist holds that knowledge is the originating or creative process. It is itself both subject and object. The term Idealism in general may be defined, therefore, as the doctrine which asserts that the objects of knowledge, whether sensuous or intellectual, are something subjective, that is, that they are ideas possessed by the thinking subject and that nothing outside the ideas corresponds to them or, at least, is known to correspond to them. The adherents of Idealism may be grouped as subjective, who in turn may be either empirical or absolute, and as objective. With the subjective idealist, the subject is a passive recipient or container; while with the objective idealist the subject is an active orderer, a creator of laws and forms by its own inherent productiveness.

Historically, Modern Idealism dates from the Father of Modern Philosophy, Rene Descartes

<sup>4</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 113.

(1596-1650), the great French exponent of "clear and distinct ideas." He held that the existence of nature could be proved only by first establishing the existence of God. This being done, it was safe, he said, to infer that other clear and distinct ideas were also representative of existence. Maintaining an accidental union between the soul and the body of man, Descartes taught that there was no dependence of either on the other, and hence between these two ultimate constituents of man there was an unbridgeable chasm. How to pass from the mind to the material world was a mystery to him and is one to the present day philosophers. The result of this belief, was the assumption that the unextended mind cannot have an immediate apprehension of extended reality in any form. It can directly know only its own states. This purely gratuitous and false assumption became the fertile breeding ground for Idealism. It was on the unwarranted conception of this French writer that the British Idealist, John Locke (1632-1704), based his Empirical Idealistic system of philosophy. The main current of Cartesian thought flows, however, not only from French and English, but also from German pens, and while the doctrine of the former is bizarre enough that of the latter culminates in a veritable cloud. In Germany one finds Idealism in its Absolute form, though when transported to England and thence to America, it is considerably toned down.

As has been stated, Locke accepted the kernel of Cartesianism, but his distrust of intellectualism led him to define a new criterion. To him the "ideas" that were most significant were those which are

directly imprinted on the mind by an external cause. Actual acquaintance with facts was surer proof of the existence of external objects than either authority or the conclusions of reason. In consequence of his esteem of Empiricism he is guilty of many logical inconsistencies. Guided in his reasoning by the assumption that we can know directly only the content of our minds, he writes, "Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them. . . . Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy, of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge; and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge." <sup>5</sup> Locke places us in an undesirable position, for the natural deduction from his theory of knowledge is that you and I can never really know external objects or events. According to him, when I think of my absent friend, my friend is a part of my psychical content, one of my ideas, and not an object of my thought. Locke by distinguishing ideas contends that there is one class of sensations which have an extra-mental cause. But since he denies the objectivity of the attributes of matter, we may, with Berkeley, ask him what is the nature of the cause.

To George Berkeley (1685-1753), the chief advo-

<sup>5</sup> Locke: *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Open Court ed., Bk. IV, p. 267.

cate of Idealism, who refers to himself as "a man who has written something with a design to promote Useful Knowledge and Religion in the world,"<sup>6</sup> it is God Himself who immediately produces in our senses the impressions which we suppose come from external objects. *Esse est percipi* is Berkeley's dictum of knowledge. The being or existence of bodies consists in their being perceived. He admits only immaterial unextended substances. He is not, however, a monist and falls short of being an absolute idealist. His dualistic position is perhaps best indicated by Hylas in a well-known dialogue. "To speak the truth, *Philonous*, I think there are two kinds of objects: the one perceived immediately, which are likewise called *ideas*; the other are real things or external objects, perceived by the mediation of ideas, which are their images and representations. Now, I own ideas do not exist without the mind; but the latter sort of objects do." "That the colours are really in the tulip, which I see is manifest. Neither can it be denied that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine; but, that any immediate object of the senses—that is, any idea, or combination of ideas—should exist in an unthinking substance, or exterior to all minds, is in itself an evident contradiction."<sup>7</sup> One cannot conceive things, he says, to exist apart from consciousness, because to conceive is to bring within consciousness. Or to put it in his own words: "But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than for me to imagine trees, for

<sup>6</sup> Letter of dedication prefixed to *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Open Court ed., p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Open Court ed., pp. 52, 41.



instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose; it only shews you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind: but it does not shew that you can conceive it possible the objects of your thought may exist without the mind.”<sup>a</sup>

Berkeley fails to distinguish between the result of knowledge and the object which is known. It is true that there is a relationship constituted between the books in a closet and the mind of him upon whose senses the books have acted. But his consciousness does not cause the existence of the books, but holds in the field of attention the images which represent the books. Berkeley in place of convincing man that knowledge is attainable, true, and certain, reduced knowledge to the transiency, relativity, and privacy of mere opinion.

David Hume (1711-1776), who may be considered a link in the development of Idealism, changed Berkeley's dictum, *Esse est percipi*, to a purely mental one. *To be*, for him, is to be a particular mental state which has no reality but its momentary presence. Berkeley maintained that “Such is the nature of *spirit*, or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which

<sup>a</sup> *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Open Court ed., p. 42.

it produceth." <sup>9</sup> Hume perceived that in order to have a meaning spirit must come within the scope of knowledge; consequently he identified it with a group of ideas. Both matter and spirit are now reduced to ideas. Perceptions therefore can exist apart from the mind. The phenomena of sense illusions proved to him that "all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits." <sup>10</sup> He thereby identified the elements of physical nature and of spiritual nature with those of mental states. To him, "The world consists, in short, of the coexistence and succession of unique individuals which instantly arise and instantly perish." <sup>11</sup> His phenomenism dissolves the world and the subject into as many elements as there are conscious associated states.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the German Idealist, perceived that with Hume's denial of the principles of order, sameness, and permanence no knowledge whatever is possible. His task, therefore, was to rescue knowledge from the destructive forces of phenomenalism. While he agreed with both Hume and Berkeley that terms of experience are essentially "phenomena," he saw that Hume's explanation of knowledge presupposed a physical order. Against this he says, "The very idea that all these phenomena, and therefore all objects with which we have to deal, are altogether within me or determinations of my own identical self, implies by itself the necessity of a permanent unity of them in one and the

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Selby-Bigge's ed., p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 138.



same apperception.”<sup>12</sup> To Kant the mistake of Berkeley consisted in his reduction of external objects to an individual mind instead of a logical mind, which fact he held would make knowledge universal. To accomplish this he abandoned Lockeian Empiricism and reverted to Intellectualism.

The essence of Kantianism lies in its doctrine of categories. Kant maintained that as nature is one great system it must be supported by a Universal Mind, for individual minds cannot effect independently this orderly, self-consistent, objective system. Although truths about nature, enunciated in the universal laws of nature, are formed by the mind, they are connected not with private opinions but with a Universal Mind. Kant, therefore, held that no knowledge can be attained of nature unless the mind impresses itself upon it. The mind makes nature an orderly system in its course of knowing it, by stamping it with the categories of time and space; thus nature is in part a product of the knowing mind. These conditions of knowledge, the categories, are resident in the nature of thought itself.

Kant's Idealism may be considered dualistic in as much as the matter of knowledge is in the external world and its form in the universal thinking mind. Without the *a priori* forms, according to the transcendental idealist, there would be no totality in perception but mere plurality. These forms being in themselves empty receive their content only from experience. It is the object known which yields the material of cognition. Hence knowledge is a mere

<sup>12</sup> Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, Max Müller's trans., 2d ed., p. 105.

union of *a priori* forms and the matter of the objects known. Since we cannot perceive things divested of time and space, and since these modifying forms are the *a priori* possessions of the intellect, we can never know objects as they are in the universe. Kant finds that to suppose nature as independent of our mind is to make it unknowable, so it must be considered in respect to form, such as space, time, substance, and causality, to be a product of the creative function of the mind. It is evident that Kantianism moves irresistibly toward Epistemological Monism and reaches its goal in the Absolutism of Hegel (1770-1831), the classical representative of Intellectual Idealism.

Previous to Georg Hegel, Johann Fichte (1762-1814), seeing that Kant's restriction of Immanence to phenomenal objects was illogical, regarded both the real subject and the real object as immanent within knowledge, neither being known nor existing apart from the other. Reality and knowledge, as is evident, were one to him. While the problem for Kant to solve was, How subject and object being distinct could be united; for Fichte it was, How subject and object or how Ego and non-Ego being identical could ever come into consciousness. And he attempted to solve it by means of an "Antithesis," which may be stated thus: In attaining to self-consciousness the Ego, the Absolute, an infinite all-embracing idea posits a non-Ego. Hegel saw at once that this abstraction, being undifferentiated, could not account for the variety of things in the universe. In order that the world be understood Hegel held it must be interpreted in terms of one

all-determining or all-enveloping being. In other words, it must be understood by analyzing reason in its essence and then tracing it through its manifestations; for the world is the consummation of reason. To Hegel "Whatever is real is rational, and whatever is rational is real." Rationality here means mutual implication between the aspects of the universe, such that all together form an absolute spirit, that is, organic unity. The Absolute Spirit or Mind is at once the substance of things and the norm of perfection. It is not immovable, but active; it is a principle neither of nature nor of mind, but is itself successively nature and mind. It is the perpetual birth of things, the process itself. According to Hegel, finite things are not simply phenomena for us existing only in our consciousness, but are things having the ground of their being not in themselves but in the Universal Mind, whose formation of truths about nature is authoritative and final.

Hegel's rationalistic synthesis is perhaps best observed in the teachings of the neo-Hegelians—Bradley, Green, Bosanquet, and Royce. To them the fundamental trait of knowledge is relation, both internal and external; for things cannot be understood except in their connection with other things. It is because of this interdependence that there must exist logically a many-in-one, a mind, the Absolute. "The 'driving force of Idealism,' as I understand it," says Bosanquet, "is not furnished by the question how mind and reality can meet in knowledge, but by the theory of logical stability, which makes it plain that nothing can fulfill the conditions of self-existence except by possessing the unity which belongs

to mind.”<sup>13</sup> The particular things, such as every tree, every flower, every man, every dog, every star are, however, real and distinct from the total of the relations which knit them together. The ordinary mind isolates its objects and cannot conceive the unity-of-difference of a concrete whole. The Absolute is, however, in no sense exclusive of the particulars. “The value of the Whole is not separable from that of its diverse aspects, and in the end apart from any of them it is reduced to nothing.”<sup>14</sup> “The logical spirit, the tendency of parts to self-transcendence and absorption in wholes is the birth-impulse of initiative, as it is the life-blood of stable existence. And the degree to which this spirit is incarnate in any world or system is one with the value, the satisfactoriness and reality by which such a system must be estimated, as also with the creative effort, by which it must be initiated.”<sup>15</sup>

Absolute Idealism of the new idealist is “dualistic monism.” There is the Absolute and its appearances, the Whole and its parts, each essential to the other, implying the other, distinct yet inseparable. This status of relation is beyond the power of the human mind to comprehend. But the new idealists say it is not the work of philosophy to explain it. “Those for whom philosophy has to explain everything need therefore not trouble themselves with my view.”<sup>16</sup> Again, “We put the whole inquiry in a wrong perspective, and lose its truth and its significance, if

<sup>13</sup> *Logic*, 2d ed., II, p. 322.

<sup>14</sup> Bradley: *Essays*, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Bosanquet: *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, pp. 23, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Bradley: *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

we make some special form of human destiny the unspoken interest of our arguments; if, one might say, when we refer to the Absolute we are really thinking of Heaven. We should not expect metaphysics to predict terrestrial history; and still less, therefore, that which lies beyond the grave.”<sup>17</sup>

Green, analyzing the object of knowledge, finds that it always consists in relations. Agreeing with all the exponents of his school that the Universe is an organic whole, comprising unity of Ground amid structural differences; and that this unity of Ground is the Absolute, he appeals to experience both for data and for verification of the theses of Absolutism. “Matter and motion, just so far as known, consist in, or are determined by, relations between the objects of that connected consciousness which we call experience.”<sup>18</sup> And again, if we “exclude from what we have considered real all qualities constituted by relation, we find that none are left. . . . If therefore, there is such a thing as a connected experience of related objects, there must be operative in consciousness a unifying principle, which not only presents related objects to itself, but at once renders them objects and unites them in relation to each other by this act of presentation. . . . The concrete whole, which may be described indifferently as an eternal intelligence realised in the related facts of the world, or as a system of related facts rendered possible by such an intelligence, partially and gradually reproduces itself in us, communicating piecemeal, but in inseparable co-relation, understanding

<sup>17</sup> Bosanquet: *Op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>18</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, paragraph 9.



and the facts understood, experience and the experienced world.”<sup>19</sup> The eternal consciousness is, therefore, reproducing itself continually in us and because of this fact, Green continues, “there can never be that actual wholeness of the world for us which there must be for the mind that renders it one. But though the conditions under which the eternal consciousness reproduces itself in our knowledge are thus incompatible with finality in that knowledge, there is an element of *identity* between the first stage of intelligent experience—between the simplest beginning of knowledge—and the eternal consciousness reproducing itself in it, which consists in the presentation of the many in one, in the apprehension of facts as related in a single system, in the conception of there being an order of things, whatever that order may turn out to be.”<sup>20</sup>

In the main Bradley accords with Green. Reality to him also is one and individual, and identical with some form of consciousness, “sentient experience.” It is in the nature of the form of consciousness, and in his lengthy arguments to establish his conclusions, that he differs from Green. Bradley says: “The Reality, therefore, must be One, not as excluding diversity, but as somehow including it in such a way as to transform its character. There is plainly not anything which can fall outside the Real. That must be qualified by every part of every predicate which it rejects; but it has such qualities as counterbalance one another’s defects. It has a superabundance in which all partial discrepancies are resolved

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, paragraphs 20, 32, 36.

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, paragraph 72.

and remain as higher concord.”<sup>21</sup> To Bradley there are no purely external relations. Unlike Green, who considered the universe as a system of relations, Bradley asserts “nothing in the whole and in the end can be external, and everything less than the Universe is an abstraction from the whole, an abstraction more or less empty, and the more empty the less self-dependent. Relations and qualities are abstractions, and depend for their being always on a whole, a whole which they inadequately express, and which remains always less or more in the background.”<sup>22</sup> He regards the Absolute as not only immediate but in every sense perfect, and it is only in relation to the Absolute that anything has reality. “Nature by itself has no reality. . . . It exists only as a form of appearance within the Absolute. . . . It is the aspect most opposed to self-independence and unity. . . . (It is but) ‘one element within the Whole’.”<sup>23</sup> “There is truth in every idea however false, there is reality in every existence however slight; and, where we can point to reality or truth, there is the one undivided life of the Absolute. Appearance without reality would be impossible, for what then could appear? And reality without appearance would be nothing, for there certainly is nothing outside appearances. But on the other hand reality is not the sum of things. It is the unity in which all things, coming together, are transmuted, in which they are changed all alike, though not changed equally.”<sup>24</sup> Compare this with the following state-

<sup>21</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 241.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 581.

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 293, 294.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 487, 488.



ment of a contemporary exponent of Idealism. "In the first place, the reality that we seek to know has always to be defined as that which either is or would be present to a sort of experience which we ideally define as organized—that is, a united and transparently reasonable—experience. . . . By the absolute reality we can only mean either that which is present to an absolutely organized experience inclusive of all possible experience, or that which would be presented as the content of such an experience if there were one."<sup>25</sup>

Such in brief is the development of Idealism. That it gives an incomplete and inadequate solution of the problem of knowledge is evident. Its influence is in large part due to its being an anti-materialistic polemic, and not to its worth as a satisfactory explanation of the process of knowledge. In their mad desire to attain unity the exponents of this system apply valid concepts, such as "Immanence," "Organic Whole," "Unity in Difference," to spheres where no valid conclusion could ensue. They concede as essentially relative the dependence and objectivity of things, and cannot explain at all how things appear to be external, individual, and material when, according to theory, they are at bottom immanent, one, and spiritual.

<sup>25</sup> Royce: *The Conception of God*, pp. 30, 31.

## CHAPTER III

### PRAGMATISM

Beginning in a hazy mist, Idealism culminated in a gorgeous cloud. Philosophic probers of the knowledge problem, while marveling at the ingenuity displayed by the formulators of this theory, which pretended to attain absolute unity, saw, nevertheless, in the Absolute of the absolute idealists but an abstraction which, instead of clarifying the knowledge problem merely made it more obscure. The natural effect was a reaction of thought in an attempt to release itself from such inconsistency by means of a practical explanation. What practical difference, it was asked, does the existence of the universe as one or many; or the identification of the known object, in part or in whole, with the knowing mind; or the admission that it is distinct from the mind entirely, make in my life?

It is just such an attitude of mind that led to the theory of Pragmatism. In fact, Pragmatism may be considered a polemic against Absolute Idealism. In the words of Schiller, it is "a systematic protest against all ignoring of the purposive character of actual knowing."<sup>1</sup> It is "the doctrine that the whole 'meaning' of a conception, expresses itself in prac-

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Humanism*, p. 11.

tical consequences, consequences either in the shape of conduct to be recommended or in that of experience to be expected if the conception be true; which consequences would be different if it were untrue, and must be different from the consequences by which the meaning of other conceptions is in turn expressed. If a second conception should not appear to have other consequences, then it must really be only the first conception under a different name.”<sup>2</sup> While Pragmatism is “nothing essentially new, it harmonizes with many ancient philosophic tendencies. It agrees with nominalism for instance, in always appealing to particulars; with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects; with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions and metaphysical abstractions.”<sup>3</sup>

While the germ of Pragmatism is found in early philosophic thought, as a system it begins historically with Mr. Charles S. Peirce (1878), whose position in philosophy is expressed in this quoted passage: Metaphysics, he says, “has hitherto been a piece of amusement for the idle minds, a sort of game at chess; and the *ratio essendi* of Pragmatism is to make a clean sweep of most of the propositions of ontology, nearly all of which are senseless rubbish, where words are defined by words and so on without ever reaching any real concept.”<sup>4</sup> It did not take root, however, until many years later when it reappeared in the writings of its representative exponents, Professor William James and John Dewey

<sup>2</sup> James in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy*.

<sup>3</sup> James: *Pragmatism*, pp. 53, 54.

<sup>4</sup> *The Monist*, April, 1905, p. 171.

of America, Dr. F. C. S. Schiller of England, Henri Bergson and Edouard Le Roy of France, and Giovanni Papini of Italy. Their point of view, as is that of all pragmatists, is empirical. Consequently to them the foundations of knowledge must rest on an active faith, on postulates whose validity depends ultimately upon their power to satisfy human needs instead of on absolute and self-evident *a priori* axioms. They are against a ready-made, "cut-and-dried," unprogressive knowledge, limited by static facts at one end and static ideals at the other, whose interest lies in contemplating an eternal perfection. As against such a system of philosophy, theirs is to be one whose system of truth is a plastic, growing organism interested in the problem of changing the world and bettering man's lot. "Mankind," says James, "is made on too uniform a pattern for any of us to escape successfully from acts of faith. We have a lively vision of what a certain view of the universe would mean for us. We kindle or we shudder at the thought, and our feeling runs through our whole logical nature and animates its workings. It *can't* be that, we feel; it *must* be this. It must be what it *ought* to be, and it *ought* to be this; and then we seek for every reason, good or bad, to make this which so deeply ought to be, seem objectively the probable thing. We show the arguments against it to be insufficient, so that it *may* be true; we represent its appeal to be our whole nature's loyalty and not to any emaciated faculty of syllogistic proof. We reinforce it by remembering the enlargement of our world of music, by thinking of the promises of sunsets and the impulses from vernal woods. And

the essence of the whole experience, when the individual swept through it says finally 'I believe,' is the intense concreteness of his vision, the individuality of the hypothesis before him, and the complexity of the various concrete motives and perceptions that issue in his final state." <sup>5</sup>

As to the real existence of the universe, the pragmatist says, "in ordinary life we assume that we live in an external world, which is 'independent' of us," and that "it would be a great calamity if any philosophy should feel it its duty to upset this assumption. For it works splendidly and the philosophy which attacked it would only hurt itself." <sup>6</sup> "The pragmatically real world is *not* an original datum of our experience at all, but an elaborate construction, made by man, individually and socially, by a purposive selection of the more efficacious, and a rejection of the less efficacious, portions of a 'primary reality' which seems chaotic to begin with, but contains a great deal more than the 'external world' extracted from it." <sup>7</sup> Whereas the absolute idealists, as James interprets them, view the universe as "a system of which the individual members may relax their anxieties occasionally, in which the don't-care mood is also right for men, and moral holidays in order,—that, if I mistake not, is part, at least, of what the Absolute is 'known-as,' that is the great difference in our particular experiences which his being true makes, for us, that is his cash-value when he is pragmatically interpreted." <sup>8</sup> To the question,

<sup>5</sup> *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. 257, 258.

<sup>6</sup> Schiller: *Op. cit.*, p. 459.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 460.

<sup>8</sup> *Pragmatism*, p. 74.

Where do the objects of our thoughts exist? the pragmatist answers: "We have no ground for saying that they are outside of experience . . . they may be continuous with the present experience itself."<sup>9</sup> Despite their rejection of Absolute Idealism, the pragmatists appropriate for use its doctrine of Immanence, for they hold that both knowledge and reality lie immanent within the tissue of experience. "In the very bosom of the finite experience, every conjunction required to make the relation intelligible is given in full."<sup>10</sup>

With the pragmatists, *idea* means judgment. There is also something peculiar and strikingly illogical in their use of the word "mean." Although this verb has four applications, namely, the interpretation meaning, purpose meaning, consequence meaning and reference meaning, to the pragmatists, only one is valid, *i.e.*, consequence meaning. "The effective meaning of any philosophic proposition can always be brought down to some particular consequence in our future practical experience."<sup>11</sup> The objects of knowledge in pragmatism are neither realities independent of us nor appearances of such realities, but merely subjective phenomena which are in the mind. Things are what "they are known as." "If you wish to find out what any philosophic term means go to experience and see what it is experienced as."<sup>12</sup> "Knowledge of sensible realities thus comes to life inside the tissue of experience. It is *made*; and made by relations that unroll them-

<sup>9</sup> James: *Mind* (N. S.), 52, p. 563.

<sup>10</sup> James: *Meaning of Truth*, pp. 102, 103.

<sup>11</sup> James: *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 674.

<sup>12</sup> Dewey: *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 399.



selves in time. Whenever certain intermediaries are given, such that, as they develop towards their terminus, there is experience from point to point of one direction followed, and finally of one process fulfilled, the result is that *their* [the pragmatists'] *starting-point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known*. That is all that knowing (in the simple case considered) can be known-as, that is the whole of its nature, put into experiential terms. Whenever such is the sequence of our experiences we may freely say that we had the terminal object 'in mind' from the outset, even altho at the outset nothing was there in us but a flat piece of substantive experience like any other, with no self-transcendency about it, and no mystery save the mystery of coming into existence and of being gradually followed by other pieces of substantive experience, with conjunctively transitional experiences between. That is what we *mean* here by the object's being 'in mind.' Of any deeper, more real way of its being in mind we have no positive conception, and we have no right to discredit our actual experience by talking of such a way at all."<sup>13</sup>

Knowledge, to the pragmatist, is not merely a product but a process. In final analysis it is a complex event involving an individual knower, a something to be known, means of knowing it and the fitting in or non-fitting in with previous experienced reality. To know an object representatively is "*to lead to it through a context which the world supplies*,"<sup>14</sup> whereas to know it immediately is "*for*

<sup>13</sup> James: *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. 106, 107.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

*mental content and object to be identical.”*<sup>15</sup> Ideas are the modes of an individual's thinking; they are what things would be were the series of their possible activities actualized. “To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.”<sup>16</sup>

Believing knowledge must be studied in a practical and not in a theoretic way, the method used by the pragmatists is “*The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, ‘categories,’ supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.*”<sup>17</sup> To them “Theoretic truth is no relation between our mind and the archetypal reality. It falls *within* the mind, being the accord of some of its processes and objects with other processes and objects.”<sup>18</sup> Truth to the pragmatists is relative, not absolute; unstable, not eternal. It is not the conformity between the knowing mind and reality but “a function of our intellectual activity or a manifestation of our objects which turn out to be useful.”<sup>19</sup> James says, “Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> James: *Pragmatism*, pp. 46, 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55.

<sup>18</sup> James: *Mind*, Vol. XIV, p. 198.

<sup>19</sup> Schiller: *Humanism*, p. 61.

its verifying itself, its veri-*fication*. Its validity is the process of its valid-*ation*. But what do the words verification and validation themselves pragmatically mean? They again signify certain practical consequences of the verified and validated idea.”<sup>20</sup> “‘Truth’ and ‘reality’ are valid, not because they are ‘independent’ of us, but because we have ‘made’ them, and they are so completely dependent on us that we can depend on them to stay ‘true’ and ‘real’ independently of us.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, no idea can be properly called true unless it be verified in the individual’s experience. “All truths must be verified to be properly true.”<sup>22</sup> To the pragmatists, knowledge is a particular kind of relation between its terms. It is immaterial, therefore, as to whether the idea is a copy of its object or not, for the truth of an idea does not lie in any present relation of similarity but in the practical sequel. An idea is true when it works; that is, when it is successful, when it performs what is demanded of it. And it “is ‘true’ so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives.”<sup>23</sup> The truth of an idea must be measured by its effects on moral and intellectual life. It is its value to the individual that measures the truth of an idea. The question of the pragmatists is not, is a thing true, but is it workable? If workable, that is, if by a series of continuous transitions the idea leads the subject to the actual presence of the object which is found to be satisfying, it becomes true.

Knowledge, therefore, is an affair wholly of tran-

<sup>20</sup> *Pragmatism*, p. 201.

<sup>21</sup> Schiller: *Studies in Humanism*, p. 462.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> James: *Pragmatism*, p. 75.

sitions and leadings within experiences. And experience is a self-sustaining reality leaning on nothing more ultimate for its support. "New truth is always a go-between, a smooth-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity. We hold a theory true just in proportion to its success in solving this 'problem of maxima and minima.' But success in solving this problem is eminently a matter of approximation. We say this theory solves it on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory; but that means more satisfactorily to ourselves and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently." <sup>24</sup> When is an idea false? we ask the pragmatist. The answer may be found in these passages, "*True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not.*" <sup>25</sup> "Truth is what is useful in building up a science; a falsehood, what is useless or noxious for the same purpose. . . . To determine therefore whether any answer to any question is 'true' or 'false' we have merely to note its effect upon the inquiry in which we are interested and in relation to which it has arisen. And if these effects are favorable the answer is 'true' and 'good'." <sup>26</sup>

Since the pragmatist considers the world as separate from the world of the individual's experience, and not as a production of the mind, he is not an absolute idealist. Nevertheless, Subjectivism can be

<sup>24</sup> James: *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>26</sup> Schiller: *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

noted in this passage from Pragmatism's leading exponent: "The simple fact is that we know the Real *as it is when we know it*; we know nothing whatever about what it is apart from that process."<sup>27</sup>

Again "the world in which we suppose ourselves to be, is, and always remains, relative to the experience which we seek to interpret by it."<sup>28</sup> James, the

foremost American representative, says: "For him [the pragmatist], as for his critic, there can be no truth if there is nothing to be true about. . . . This is why as a pragmatist I have so carefully posited 'reality' *ab initio*, and why, throughout my whole discussion, I remain an epistemological realist."<sup>29</sup>

These citations show that Pragmatism has two forms, the subjective and the realistic, although James holds "we all three [including Dewey] absolutely agree in admitting the transcendency of the object (provided it be an experienceable object) to the subject, in the truth-relation. . . . What misleads so many of them [the critics] is possibly . . . the fact that the universes of discourse of Schiller, Dewey, and myself are panoramas of different extent. . . . Schiller's universe is the smallest, being essentially a psychological one. He starts with but one sort of thing, truth-claims, but is led ultimately to the independent objective facts which they assert, inasmuch as the most successfully validated of all claims is that such facts are there. My universe is more essentially epistemological. I start with two things, the objective facts and the claims."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 11, note.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>29</sup> James: *Meaning of Truth*, p. 195.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. xvii-xix.

The value of Pragmatism as a theory of knowledge cannot be estimated in positive terms, for its contribution to this problem lies in its illuminating by the trial and error method the practical absurdities of Absolute Idealism.



## CHAPTER IV

### PHYSICAL AND CRITICAL REALISM

The term Realism has many shades of meaning. As opposed, however, to the Idealistic Theory of Knowledge, it means an acquaintance not only with thought processes but with the excitant objects of these activities. In consequence of the various interpretations given to reality and its relation to the knowing mind, many realistic solutions of the knowledge problem have been presented. While Physical Realism is not prominent among them, it has, nevertheless, some importance for our study. Its fundamental tenet, that consciousness is an act of awareness of physical content, anticipates the characteristic doctrine of English New Realism, disagreeing with it, however, in its explanation of just what "awareness" is.

Physical Realism, as an epistemological theory, appeared first about 1888. Its author, Thomas Case, has remained till the present day its sole prominent defender, though his ideas exerted but small influence on contemporaries. The influence of scientific findings on the knowledge problem is evident in this theory, which is a peculiar form of representationism. It lies midway between Ideal-

ism and Intuitive Realism. It appropriates as a foundation for its theory of knowledge the presumptions and assumptions of Physical Science. The object of its criticism is the perception of the primary and secondary qualities in things. It holds, against the idealist, that these qualities are not mere states of consciousness, and against the intuitive realist, that they are not modes of external universe, but forms or states of the perceiver's organism. What we know first and directly are not the extra-mental things but the sensible effects which things have upon the inner organism. "For example, the hot felt and the white seen are produced by external objects and are apprehended by internal sensations of touch and vision, but are themselves respectively the tactile and optic nerves sensibly affected in the manner apprehended as hot and white." <sup>1</sup> Again, "the hot felt is the tactile nerves heated, the white seen is the optic nerves so coloured." <sup>2</sup>

The physical realist maintains the existence of an external reality distinct from the human mind, a reality as conceived and interpreted by the scientists. He reasons, however, that since only internal processes can be apprehended directly and immediately the objects existing in the world, and the world itself, must be inferred from this internal data. Holding to the logical principle that an inference can pass only to what is similar in kind, these internal sensible data from which external objects are scientifically inferred must be physical, not psychical; otherwise effect and cause would be

<sup>1</sup> Case: *Physical Realism*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

dissimilar. Science being the background for the physical realist, all the latter's assertions are colored by the results of scientific research. Science, Physical Realism holds, is certain only of the external reality of the primary or "quantitative" qualities: extension, shape, motion, unity, multitude, etc. Hence they have internal correlates, but not the secondary qualities: heat, color, taste, smell and tactile qualities. These latter are unlike their own directly apprehended correlates, and are known only because they are interpreted as varieties of the external correlates of primary qualities. This theory substantiates its explanation by attributing these effects to the peculiar constitution of man's organism which has the power to assume and present to consciousness, states similar to primary qualities when there is actual causal influence, but which can present to self only dissimilar states of secondary qualities. "External motion is like sensible motion, but external heat is an imperceptible mode of motion while sensible heat is not sensibly a motion at all." <sup>3</sup> The mind seeking a reason for this unwarranted distinction reads, "though at first sight sensible heat would demand a similar external object, when all the facts of sensible heat are accumulated they are found to be the kind of facts that are only produced by motion." <sup>4</sup> "The nervous system is far more susceptible of similar effects from primary than from secondary qualities. It is more capable of reflecting the waves of the sea than the undulations of æther." <sup>5</sup> The founder of Physical Realism

<sup>3</sup> Case: *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>5</sup> Case: *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

thus continues: " . . . sense sometimes presents motion as motion, but cannot help presenting the hot, the red, etc., as heterogeneous to motion, because of the structure of the sensory nerves; [but] science, by comparing sensible motion with the sensible facts of the hot, the red, etc., infers that the external cause of the latter is really a mode of motion." <sup>6</sup>

What grounds has Physical Realism for its supposition that the perceiver's organism or nervous system mirrors the inferred external qualities of things in a similar way when these are extension, shape, motion, etc., and only in a dissimilar way when they are smell, heat, taste, etc.? None that the thinking mind unfettered by the gratuitous assumptions of science can discern. Furthermore, what right has the physical realist to assume that the external world cannot be immediately perceived, when he contends that the perceiver is directly and immediately conscious of the nerve qualities of his organism awakened by the action of external reality? Are not these qualities extra-mental, and therefore external to consciousness? Although subjective in the sense of being modifications of the organism of man they are, nevertheless, external in the sense of being outside the principle of knowing. Surely it does not simplify nor make more rational the process of knowledge, to assert an immediate perception of the effected modification of the nervous system by an external reality, and merely an inferential knowledge of the determining cause. If the mind under the influence of the external factor can elicit a con-

<sup>6</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 31.

sciously perceptive act, what reason can there validly be to justify the denial of a direct apprehension of the stimulus which is capable of actuating a sense-organ?

Physical Realism, by conceiving the secondary qualities as subjective, consciously-apprehended effects, resulting from the primary qualities and their sensible, imperceptible modes of motion in the perceiver, is idealistic, despite its assertion that the direct objects of our sense-perception are physical realities and not mental phenomena.

Another form of Realism called Critical Realism projected in 1916 by Durant Drake, Arthur O. Lovejoy, James B. Pratt, Arthur Rogers, George Santayana, Roy Wood Sellars, and C. A. Strong, professors in American universities, was presented to the philosophical world in 1920. It is a form of Epistemological Dualism and as such is opposed to the Epistemological Monism of New Realism, for which, as we shall see, the ultimate reality is the presented datum. Although Critical Realism contains a theory of knowledge it is partly a polemic against the teachings of the New Realists. Historically, therefore, it should be treated later, but since it accepted one of the tenets of Physical Realism it claims attention here.

With the physical realist it holds that "a reality, independent of the ideas cognitive of it,"<sup>7</sup> exists. While it believes in the existence of physical objects it maintains that we do not know them directly, as such perception would render an explanation of error impossible, because error can only be accounted

<sup>7</sup> Drake and others: *Essays in Critical Realism*, p. 211.



for by the existence of "mental" and "real" mediated by what they call "datum" or "essence." What we perceive directly is the "datum," "essence," "character-complex," "content" or "meaning." "Physical things," says Sellars, "are the objects of knowledge, though they can be known only in terms of the data which they control within us."<sup>8</sup> Again, ". . . knowledge of objects is mediated by ideas which are *in some sense* distinct from the objects of knowledge."<sup>9</sup> We "*know* physical objects, and . . . as a result of reflection, . . . we *intuit* only contents."<sup>10</sup>

What then is the critical realist's conception of knowledge? To him it "is just the insight into the nature of the object that is made possible by the contents which reflect it in consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Or, ". . . *knowledge is a function of the knower rather than a peculiar, real relation between the knower and the known.*"<sup>12</sup> It is no direct relation between mind and object, but a direct relation to the datum or essence which is naturally and reflectively referred to the world apart from self. This datum is the means by which things are known, or in other words, it is a "vehicle" of knowledge but is not identical with the thing. What we perceive are not existing things but the essences or data which are neither physical nor psychical, but logical. These data are not selected aspects of the object perceived but character-complexes, the logical essences of real things.

What precisely does the critical realist mean by

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.



"essence"? Is essence that which makes a thing to be what it is, that which puts a thing in a determinate species? Emphatically no. By "essence," says Professor Santayana, "I understand a universal, of any degree of complexity and definition, which may be given immediately, whether to sense or to thought. Only universals have logical or aesthetic individuality, or can be given directly, clearly, and all at once. . . . This object of pure sense or pure thought with no belief superadded, an object inwardly complete and individual, but without external relations or physical status, is what I call an essence."<sup>13</sup> Professor Strong in his essay, *On the Nature of the Datum*, maintains first of all that the "datum" is what we are immediately conscious of in sense-perception. It "is the logical essence of the real thing. By 'essence' I mean its *what* divorced from its *that*—its entire concrete nature, including its sensible character, but not its existence. . . . Data are directly dependent on the individual organism, not on the external object, varying in their character with the constitution of the sense-organs and the way in which these are affected, and only secondarily and indirectly with the external thing. . . . We have no power of penetrating to the object itself and intuiting it immediately, but are dependent for our information concerning it on the effects which it is able to produce within the body."<sup>14</sup>

The essence, as is clear from these citations, is what is given in perception. In its apprehension it

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 168, footnote.

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 223, 225.

is not a psychical state, yet a psychical state must always be present, as the mental state enables us to know that which is known, the datum. Professor Drake says, "We must insist that the data of consciousness are *qualia*, which must not be ignored in describing the perceptual situation. These three factors are always present in veridical perception: the outer physical event, the mental event, and the Appearance or datum."<sup>15</sup> Professor Sellars offers a like explanation in this passage, ". . . there are two elements in perception: *the affirmation of a co-real and the assigned set of characters or aspects*. Suppose we call these, respectively, the object of perception and the content of perception. The content is intuited; the object is reacted to and affirmed."<sup>16</sup> The critical realist holds, therefore, to three factors of knowledge: ". . . (1) the affirmation of an object or ideatum; (2) the idea or content given to the knowing self; and (3) the interpretation of the first in terms of the second. To these three on the subjective side, there must correspond the affirmed existent with its determinate nature on the objective side. The interpretation of the object may be of the almost automatic sort characteristic of perception, or it may be of the more conscious sort found in science."<sup>17</sup> Thus the cognitive value of the idea is the fundamental postulate of knowledge. In order that we may know an object, the critical realists say we must think the nature of the object in terms of the given content, which is its essence. In this content are "the fundamental categories, such as time, space, structure, relations,

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 19.      <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.      <sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 197, 198.

and behaviour, in terms of which we think the world.”<sup>18</sup>

When we look out at the universe, What is perceived?—we ask the critical realist. In Professor Sellars’ essay, “Knowledge and Its Categories,” we find an answer: “I open my eyes and perceive concrete *things*. What are concrete things? *They are not merely character-complexes*. They are co-reals to be adjusted to, independent, common, and full of various capacities. . . . Perceived things are co-real with the percipient, and independent of him in exactly the same way and to the same degree that they are independent of one another.”<sup>19</sup> And he says elsewhere “ . . . we must distinguish between the givenness of content and knowledge of the physical thing . . . we do not *infer* a realm of existence co-real with ourselves but, instead, *affirm* it through the very pressure and suggestion of our experiences . . . contents are given or intuited, while objects are known.”<sup>20</sup>

By maintaining the object cannot be known except in terms of the content, which latter is intuited, while the physical realm or object cannot be intuited, the critical realists bring about the destruction of their thesis. If these “characters,” “contents,” call them what you will, are real qualities belonging to physical objects and not mere mental images, how is it possible for us to intuit them, to have immediate knowledge of their existence, yet to deny a like kind of knowledge of the physical object? Such an evident contradiction makes knowledge an impossibility. These “contents,” “appearances” being acci-

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 200.    <sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 196.    <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

dents of the things cannot naturally exist except in that which they modify; hence in their perception the physical object is simultaneously known. And if these "contents" are simply mental forms, the mind's interpretation of the object and not characteristics of it, then the objective reality is not known. According to the critical realist the "data," "contents," "characters" are what are given in sense-perception, but these characters are inseparable neither from the existing real things nor the mental representations of them. The only possibility left as to their place of existence is somewhere in mid air, and their nature an agreement with the actual characters of objects. In trying to steer out of the path of Idealism, and yet not enter that of Scholasticism, Critical Realism has formulated a pseudo-theory of knowledge, which is in the main idealistic. Unless we are mistaken in our interpretation of Critical Realism the datum in terms of which the physical existent must be known corresponds to sensations, those modifications wrought in the organism by the action of a stimulus. If this be true, then it is a type of Idealism and not of Realism with only a borrowed element of the latter, although at a superficial first glance one would judge its environmental keynote to be the same as that of traditional Realism.

## CHAPTER V

### NEW REALISM AS A POLEMIC

Our brief and cursory study of the various attempted solutions of the knowledge problem as given by the naïve realists, idealists and pragmatists, in whose theories the roots of New Realism are grounded, reveals the utter futility of centuries of philosophical investigation to come to a unanimous solution, not of this problem alone but as a consequence of any one of the deeper problems of life. Hence there is a feeling current among philosophers that not only are these problems as far from solution now as they ever were, but that the only result of philosophy has been a conflict of multitudinous opinions. "What are the main results," asks Sheldon, "reached by the philosophers? A superficial inspection reveals a goodly number of them, many displaying remarkable acumen, many dull and barbarously expressed, many profoundly interesting. But what is our amazement when, looking a bit deeper, we find that each system denies the fundamental principles of the rest! And it must be confessed that a still more thorough examination does not remove this impression. Let any professional philosopher be asked to name *one* doctrine that is by his compeers generally accepted. If he is dis-

ingenuous enough to name one, it will be found that others name a different one.”<sup>1</sup>

This feeling of disgust with the results of the centuries of philosophic thought, and of the failure on the part of philosophy to give certain and final solutions to the problem of its investigation has led many to believe that nothing short of a radical revolution in our forms of thinking will cure the deep-seated ailment. These ultra-modern philosophers maintain that if ultimate success is to be attained, there must be a decisive cutting away from the modes of thought common in the past and from all traditional beliefs and practices. In the following quotation of Doctor G. Stanley Hall, a typical instance of this sense of utter intellectual breakdown is found: “Now, when all human institutions so slowly and laboriously evolved are impugned, every consensus challenged, every creed flouted, as much as and perhaps even more than by the ancient Sophists, the call comes to us . . . to explore, test, and, if necessary, reconstruct the very bases of conviction, for all open questions are new opportunities. Old beacon lights have shifted or gone out. Some of the issues we lately thought to be minor have taken on cosmic dimensions. We are all ‘up against’ questions too big for us so that there is everywhere a sense of insufficiency which is too deep to be fully deployed in the narrow field of consciousness. Hence there is a new discontent with old leaders, standards, criteria, methods and values, and a demand everywhere for new ones, a realization that mankind must now reorient itself and take its bearings from the

<sup>1</sup> *Strife of Systems and Productive Duality*, pp. 25, 26.



eternal stars and sail no longer into the unknown future by the dead reckonings of the past.”<sup>2</sup> Rashdall expresses the same thought in *The Spirit of the New Philosophy* when he says, “The only existing order in the world is frank and open disorder. . . . The simple fact is that humanity has been fast outgrowing the forms and institutions and beliefs that have been handed down from the past.”<sup>3</sup> Yes, this is an age of intellectual iconoclasm; in every department, social, domestic, educational, industrial, political, religious there is open discontent, distrust, repugnance, and even contempt for anything that savors of the old. This is an experimental age, accordingly nothing escapes analysis, that is, physical partition; for mental abstraction, as a process of knowing the essence of a thing, is one of those traditional processes which with the abandonment of the distinction between mind and matter, the new experimental philosophers have relegated to the rubbish heap. With the rashness of youth these experimentalists explore the field of the mind with the same tools which they use in the field of matter; hence their doubt of a spiritual element in man becomes ultimately a denial of it.

The twentieth century with its self-sufficient spirit as shown in its desire for independence of thought, originality of belief, and freedom of conduct furnished fertile ground for the birth of New Realism. Thus at the opening of this century there appeared in a philosophical journal, two articles by George

<sup>2</sup> “The Message of the Zeitgeist,” *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. XIII, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *The Spirit of the New Philosophy*, p. 34.

Moore, "The Nature of Judgment" <sup>4</sup> and "The Refutation of Idealism," <sup>5</sup> which may be considered the initial step in the formation of English New Realism. Samuel Alexander later reduced it to systematic form. But it is Bertrand Russell, by his contribution of modern mathematical logic, who is in England the most prominent defender of this new theory. New Realism was inaugurated in this country in 1910 with the appearance in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* of "The Program and First Platform of Six Realists," the collaborators being the distinguished professors, Edwin B. Holt (1873-) and Ralph Barton Perry (1876-) of Harvard University, William Pepperell Montague (1873-) and Walter B. Pitkin of Columbia University, Edward Gleason Spaulding (1872-) of Princeton University, and Walter T. Marvin (1872-) of Rutgers College. This platform, says Doctor Kremer, "repudiated all subjectivism, all *a priori* idealism and made a profession of realist and empiricist faith; it announced the intention of collaborating in the constitution of a scientific philosophy, common to all the group, in spite of certain individual differences." <sup>6</sup> These American New Realists, attributing the obscurity of genuine philosophical problems and the slow progress made by philosophy to "lack of coöperation, common terminology, and a working agreement as to fundamental presuppositions . . . hope that by coöperation genuine problems will be revealed, philosophical thought will be clarified, and a way opened for real progress.

<sup>4</sup> *Mind* (N.S.), Vol. VIII, 1899, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> *Mind* (N.S.), Vol. XII, 1903, p. 433.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Néo-Réalisme Américain*, p. 14.

. . . Such coöperation [they hold] has three fairly distinct, though not necessarily successive stages: first, it seeks a statement of fundamental principles and doctrines; secondly, it aims at a program of constructive work following a method founded on these principles and doctrines; finally, it endeavors to obtain a system of axioms, methods, hypotheses, and facts, which have been so arrived at and formulated that at least those investigators who have coöperated can accept them as a whole.”<sup>7</sup> It was not, however, until two years later, when a co-operative volume, *New Realism*, by the same six writers was published, that American New Realism became recognized generally as a tendency in philosophy.

While the American New Realists disagree with the English on many points, the most prominent one being their interpretation of consciousness, they agree with them in discarding sensations and images as merely psychical existents, and in holding that in the act of knowledge there is the identical presence of the object in the knower. Strongly noticeable, too, in their writings is the influence of Bertrand Russell's logical doctrines. Whether English or American in type, New Realism is a polemic against Idealism. Concomitant with the heated discussions which followed the publication of the “platform,” American New Realism came in conflict with Pragmatism; so to-day this system may also be looked upon as a critique of the latter. It is not, however, at total variance with either Idealism or Pragmatism for Professor Perry says that “with

<sup>7</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 471.

idealism it maintains the validity and irreducibility of logical and moral science; and with pragmatism, the practical and empirical character of the knowledge process, and the presumptively pluralistic constitution of the universe." <sup>8</sup>

Before proceeding further in our observations on New Realism, let us get a clear notion of the term "realism." Etymologically, it is derived from the Latin "res" or thing, and "ismus," an ending equivalent to our English "ness." Literally, therefore, "realism" means "thingness." In Scholastic terminology, the real is the opposite of the unreal or non-real. Real being may be either actual or potential, *i.e.*, having existence here and now or the capability of it. For example, the paper of this book is an actual real being while the paper that is yet to be manufactured is a potential real being. Whatever is not real is nothing or non-being. Such for example would be a *talking stick*, for the notes of the concept *talking* and those of the concept *stick* are mutually incompatible. Or, to put it in other words, they are of such a nature as to contradict each other, and hence cannot be joined together. We have now a cue to the meaning of the terms Realism and Idealism as applied to philosophical systems. And we may say that in the last analysis every system of philosophy, every theory of knowledge, is either Realistic or Idealistic.

But who are the Realists? We answer, all who maintain there exists in the extra-mental world something corresponding to the representation in the mind. In other words, when we say, "Roses are

<sup>8</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 272.

flowers," "Men are fallible," "Dogs are quadrupeds," the mental representations expressed by the terms in these propositions—roses, men, dogs—truly correspond to a reality existing respectively in individual roses, men, and dogs. In still other words, our specific and generic concepts are neither arbitrary nor *a priori* productions of the mind, but mental abstractions which represent truly though inadequately corresponding extra-mental realities. Deny that we have any such concepts and we must necessarily deny that a reality exists corresponding to them. On the objective validity of our general concepts there are the theories of Nominalism, Realism—Exaggerated and Moderate—and Conceptualism. The Nominalists, to which class all Positivists, Agnostics, and Materialists belong, deny the knowability of the nature or essence or inner constitution of things. They limit valid knowledge to sense knowledge, thus they implicitly do away with science. To them, therefore, ideas are simply handy names by means of which we ticket or label our stock of particular sense images which have a sameness of characteristics.

The conceptualists, while admitting that abstract concepts are something more than mere names, that they are in fact true mental representations of all the individuals of the class, deny that there is anything in the extra-mental world corresponding to the universal idea in the mind. Inasmuch as they do not absolutely deny the existence of an extra-mental reality, they are realists, and inasmuch as they deny that there is any subsisting extra-mental reality knowable, they are idealists.



Now, Realism holds that things are what they are, independently of their being known. In no wise can external objects be reducible to subjective terms. There is an extra-mental reality corresponding to both our specific and generic concepts. The exaggerated realists maintain that they are separate entities existing by themselves. According to this extravagant doctrine the universal has objective existence in the real order as a universal.

The Scholastic theory, which is called Moderate Realism in this particular problem, gives the only satisfactory explanation. It maintains that the objective correlative of our specific and generic ideas, which represent the essences of things, their whatness, exists in the individual, concrete things, not formally and actually, but virtually or potentially or fundamentally. As an entity having extra-mental existence, this essence is singular and concrete; but when it is apprehended by the mind apart from the attributes which make it particular and concrete, it becomes formally universal; that is, when the intellect has abstracted it from material and individualizing conditions and by an act of reflection sees that this nature as it is mentally conceived is predicable of all individuals of a class, that it is one and many at the same time, this essence, say for example "man," becomes a reflex universal. It is thus obvious that the universal does not exist formally except in the mind and that it is neither a creation nor a production of the mind, but is merely discovered by the mind existing potentially in individuals and is educed from that latent state to a state of actuality. This nature or essence is speci-



fically the same in all the individuals of a class. In them, its mode of being is actually concrete and singular. When apprehended by the mind, its mode of being becomes abstract; in that state it is predicable in the same sense of all the individuals of the class whose essence it represents; it becomes in technical language, formally universal. The whole Scholastic position is dependent upon the admission of an essential difference between sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge, upon the recognition that the mind has the power to apprehend the nature or whatness of things apart from the particularizing and individualizing attributes.

Such in a general way is the Old Realism. Now it must be evident that the New Realism must have something in common with the old, else it could not be called new. In common with the Old Realism, the new theory teaches that the object is other than the subject, and is independent of the subject; that is, objects exist and are what they are, whether minds are aware of them or not. Before studying how it differs from the Old Realism, it will be of benefit to state briefly its reasons for dissatisfaction with what is called Naïve or Common Sense Realism and Dualism on the one hand, and with all forms of Idealism or Subjectivism on the other. As stated in an earlier chapter, the naïve realist teaches that objects are directly presented to the mind, and are just what they appear to be; that there is no intermediary between the knower and the object known. Reality is faithfully and accurately reflected in consciousness. In this theory the subject or knower is purely passive like a mirror; the only activity is

on the part of the object which somehow impresses itself upon the mind. The New Realists reject Naïve Realism, and rightly so, on these grounds: "a complete disregard of the personal equation and of the elaborate mechanism underlying sense perception."<sup>9</sup> In consequence of this disregard of the knowing subject, it is utterly unable to solve the perplexities involved in error, in illusion and in dreams. Moreover, it leads to relativity of knowledge. "The events we perceive as present are always past, for in order to perceive anything it must send energy of some kind to our sense organs, and by the time the energy reaches us the phase of existence which gave rise to it has passed away. To this universal and necessary temporal aberration of perceived objects is added an almost equally universal spatial aberration. For all objects that move relatively to the observer are perceived not where they are when perceived, but, at best, where they were when the stimulus issued from them."<sup>10</sup> Besides "what we perceive will depend not only upon the nature of the object but on the nature of the medium through which its energies have passed on their way to our organism; and also upon the condition of our sense organs and brain."<sup>11</sup>

The second theory to which the New Realists object is Dualism as exemplified in the philosophies of Descartes and Locke. These philosophers hold that "the mind never perceives anything external to itself. It can perceive only its own ideas or states. But as it seems impossible to account for the order

<sup>9</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 3, 4.

in which these ideas occur by appealing to the mind in which they occur, it is held to be permissible and even necessary to infer a world of external objects resembling to a greater or less extent the effects, or ideas, which they produce in us. What we perceive is now held to be only a picture of what really exists." <sup>12</sup>

The New Realists observe that while this theory accounts fully for error and illusion, it seems to account for nothing else. "The only external world is one that we can never experience, the only world that we can have any experience of is the internal world of ideas." <sup>13</sup> The New Realists logically conclude that the only world that this theory can infer is one whose nature is constituted of mental states, since our experience is limited by it to mental states; hence if such a world did exist, it would be nothing like the world of experience but a sort of dreamland.

The greatest quarrel of the New Realists as of all Realists is with the third of these theories, namely, Subjectivism. "The escape from subjectivism and the formulation of an alternative that shall be both remedial and positively fruitful, constitutes the central preëminent issue for any realistic protagonist. It is prior to all other philosophical issues, such as monism and pluralism, eternalism and temporalism, materialism and spiritualism, or even pragmatism and intellectualism. This does not mean that the new realism shall not lead to a solution of these problems, but only that as a basis for their clear discussion it is first of all essential to

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

get rid of subjectivism.”<sup>14</sup> New Realism is first and foremost a polemic, and “primarily a polemic against subjectivism.”<sup>15</sup> “In the first place, realism contends that idealism has not proved its case. It has depended for such proof upon fallacious forms of procedure, such as . . . ‘argument from the ego-centric predicament’ and ‘definition by initial predication.’ . . . In the second place, that idealism is beset with a difficulty of its own invention—the difficulty of *subjectivism* or *solipsism*.”<sup>16</sup> The two fallacies, “argument from the ego-centric predicament” and “definition by initial predication,” Professor Perry considers the basic arguments for Idealism. “A study of the later development of idealism will disclose the fact that it relies mainly, if not entirely, on the Berkeleyan proofs—‘definition by initial predication,’ and ‘argument from the ego-centric predicament.’”<sup>17</sup> These two with “the fallacy of pseudo-simplicity,” “the fallacy of exclusive particularity,” “the speculative dogma,” “the error of verbal suggestion,” “the fallacy of illicit importance,” are grouped by the New Realists under the heading of traditional errors, which fallacies they discover in all rival philosophical tendencies.

In order to understand better New Realism as a constructive system of philosophy it is most necessary that the meaning of these fallacies be grasped, because it is in the refutation of them that much of the positive doctrine of New Realism is expressed. These errors of which the New Realists find all “sub-

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 317.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

jectivistic philosophies to be guilty" are not considered by them as "necessarily confined to such philosophies. They may be generalized; and in so far as they are generalized their discovery is of greater moment."<sup>18</sup> As has been seen, one of the fundamental fallacies charged against Idealism or Subjectivism is called, "argument from the egocentric predicament," *i.e.*, "from the circumstantial presence of the knower in all cases of things known,"<sup>19</sup> in which "consists . . . the impossibility of finding anything that is not known."<sup>20</sup> The fact is that "*no thinker to whom one may appeal is able to mention a thing that is not idea*, for the obvious and simple reason that *in mentioning it he makes it an idea*. No one can report on the nature of things without being on hand himself. It follows that whatever thing he reports does as a matter of fact stand in relation to him, as his idea, object of knowledge or experience."<sup>21</sup> What does this peculiar methodological difficulty prove for the idealist? Nothing, answers the New Realist. "No more than that *finding* is finding; no amount of reiteration or verbal alteration can ever make it prove what the idealist wants it to prove—namely, that *being* is finding, that in order to be or to be what they are, things *must* be found."<sup>22</sup> The argument is not conclusive, because it is a case of the method of agreement unsupported by the method of difference. And to apply the latter it would be necessary to find

<sup>18</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>20</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.



cases of "non-things which are not known," and this is an impossibility, for the very fact that the searching process is a form of the knowledge relationship. With the refutation of this principle, "the definition of being in terms of consciousness," the main argument in support of Idealism is, in the opinion of the New Realists, destroyed.

Another fundamental specious argument of Idealism as already indicated is the "fallacy of definition by initial predication." "It consists in regarding some early, familiar, or otherwise accidental characterization of a thing as definitive. . . . Now idealists habitually construe things as 'thought of,' and accordingly name them 'objects of thought,' or 'ideas.' But while . . . it is the thing itself, and not a duplicate or representation of it that *is* thought of, it does not follow that to be thought of, or otherwise known, is either necessary or important for things. . . . The use of 'definition by initial predication' appears, for example, in the common habit among idealists of adopting what is called *the standpoint of experience*. This standpoint being once adopted, and the meaning of experience formulated, idealism needs no further proof."<sup>28</sup> If the existence of an object depends, as the idealist maintains, on its being known; if there is no distinction between the real and the conceptual order, then it must necessarily follow that a term can have but one relationship and this relationship must be of its very essence; that is, the term must be defined in terms of this relationship. Since the assumption that "a particular term of any system belongs to

<sup>28</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, pp. 128, 133.



such system *exclusively*"<sup>24</sup> is false, the conclusion likewise must be false. The New Realists hold that Idealism "must prove that to classify things as ideas, objects of knowledge, or experiences, is *the most fundamental disposition that can be made of them*. To classify them thus at the outset, and then to *prefer* this classification to the many other possible ones, is simply to assume the very thesis under discussion."<sup>25</sup>

The basis of this error is the "fallacy of exclusive particularity," or "the supposition that an identical term can figure in only *one* relationship."<sup>26</sup> The New Realists raise a protest against such an assumption, and disprove it experimentally. In their own phraseology—"The point *b* of the class of points that constitutes the straight line *abc* may belong also to the class of points that constitutes the intersecting straight line *xby*. The man John Doe who belongs to the class *Republican Party* may belong also to the intersecting class *captains of industry*. . . . All the terms of discourse are general in the sense that they belong to several contexts. . . . Without this generality of terms the world would possess no structure, not even motion or similarity; for there could be no motion if the same could not be in different places at different times, and there could be no similarity if the same could not appear in different qualitative groupings."<sup>27</sup> While we are in perfect agreement with the first part of this quoted passage, it seems to us that there is implied

<sup>24</sup> Holt and others: *New Realism*, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>27</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 14.

in the excerpt the externality of the term, and its identification with the individual object. If such is the case, we raise a protest against New Realism. This observation is just a passing one; a discussion of the matter will take place in our study of its constructive aspect.

Another fallacy in philosophical systems of the past, the New Realists call "speculative dogma," which means the "assumption for philosophical purposes that there is an all-sufficient, all-general principle, a single fundamental proposition that adequately determines or explains everything."<sup>28</sup> According to them, "The possibility of defining, on general logical grounds, a maximum of being or truth, is, to say the least, highly questionable; and it is certain that this problem must properly precede any inferences from such a maximal idea."<sup>29</sup> It is evident the New Realists do not understand the mind's capability of interpreting the universe under the common aspect of reality. As we shall see in a later chapter, it is their false theory of mind that accounts for their denial of a unifying principle in the world.

According to the New Realists another general defect of the philosophical systems of the past, is the error of "pseudo-simplicity" "which amounts virtually to the abandonment of analysis."<sup>30</sup> While they consider this fallacy typical of Idealism, "Traditional spiritistic conceptions of will, activity, immediacy, and life, rest on the same fundamental misapprehension as does the materialistic accept-

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 271.

ance of body as an irreducible entity.”<sup>31</sup> This fallacy is common, therefore, not to Idealism alone but to Traditional and Materialistic philosophy as well. By traditional philosophy we understand them to mean Scholasticism. Now the error, they say, consists in assuming as simple datum that which in reality is complex, and from this false assumption follows a neglect of analysis. On the initial apprehension an individual object is construed by the mind as an individual unity, because it is known by some one character, called by the traditional philosophers, “essence” or “substance.” But upon investigation there is revealed a variety of characters having a “relational unity,” whereupon the mind must of necessity admit the individual object to be a complex entity of simple characters, and not a simple entity. It is in their discussion of this fallacy, together with its sequel—“error of indefinite potentiality”—and “speculative dogma,” that the New Realists reveal their true identity.

“The error of indefinite potentiality,” or “the fallacy of illicit importance” from another point of view, rests on the supposition that “a substance or essence . . . is supposed to have some necessary relation to the characters which analysis yields, and which are called its attributes.”<sup>32</sup> Now a substance or essence as contrasted with its attributes, the New Realists consider simply a “name . . . or some one of its attributes, arbitrarily singled out for the purpose of identification.”<sup>33</sup> There is no necessary connection, at least of direct relation, between the

<sup>31</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 67.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem.*

essence or substance and its numerous attributes. "Thus one does not have a concept of an indivisible essence 'gold,' and then see that it implies 'yellowness,' 'malleability,' a certain specific gravity, etc. . . . Gold is regarded as the potentiality of these things; but there is no evidence that it is the potentiality of *just* these things, or of these things exclusively. It is an indefinite and indeterminate potentiality, a 'that which,' with the sequel unaccounted for."<sup>34</sup> The thing itself, they hold, is complex; it is the knowledge of the thing that is simple. Has not the New Realist forgotten the distinction between physical and metaphysical division on the one hand, and logical division on the other? The attributes, yellowness, malleability, and so forth, are accidents of the substance called gold. The mind simply grasps piecemeal, as it were, the nature of the individual object and gives, so to speak, a distinct and separate existence to the attributes apart from the substance. Since these attributes are modifications of the object called "gold," and are apprehended by the senses, they have a reality; but they have no physical existence apart from being a determination of the substance; they have a metaphysical existence, however, which gives them distinct and separable existence in concept only. It is rather a case of our knowledge of gold being complex than the object itself being such. Gold can be conceived in two orders: the physical and the conceptual. It seems to us the New Realists either are ignorant of or ignore the latter order, or hold a conception of the nature of the mind which implicitly denies the

<sup>34</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

power of abstraction which logical division presupposes. In their conception of an individual thing as an aggregate of accidents, they are Humean.

There is yet another general fallacy claimed by the New Realists to be common in philosophic discussions, "the error of verbal suggestion." It may be looked upon as a cloak under which the "real fruitlessness of the other errors may be concealed, and the philosophy employing them given a meretricious plausibility and popular vogue."<sup>35</sup> This fallacy is nothing more than a loose use of words, or the invention of meaningless combinations of them to cover over some obscure point in an attempted explanation of something which cannot be explained. The New Realists aim to revise philosophy, and intend to accomplish this object by the scrupulous use of words and by definition which they tell us means "the unequivocal and conventional reference of words."<sup>36</sup> The latter will be remedial against the confusion which comes from the substitution of a single word for a group of words, from using a single word to indicate a complex object. They maintain that the "speculative dogma" is the most prolific cause of the verbal abuses which abound in philosophy. Thus the most important task for the philosopher is to purge philosophy of the principal source of its errors, and this is one of the tasks undertaken by the New Realists.

Since "speculative dogma," "the fallacy of pseudo-simplicity" and "the error of indefinite potentiality" are a trio of fallacies charged against traditionalism,

<sup>35</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 271.

<sup>36</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 23.

a "limited mysticism"—which term we understand to mean Scholasticism—New Realism is at variance with the most fundamental tenets of this system. Our inspection of its polemical aspect manifests to us its most general characteristics which we shall enunciate in our discussion of it as a constructive philosophy. We may safely say that the reasons for which Subjectivism or Idealism were rejected will determine in some way the system which is to be given to the philosophical world as more in accord with common sense. Thus in their own words: "the new realism is, broadly speaking, a return to that naïve or natural realism. . . . So the first and most urgent problem for the new realists is to amend the realism of common sense in such wise as to make it compatible with the facts of relativity."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 10.



## CHAPTER VI

### NEW REALISM: THE KNOWABLE UNIVERSE

In giving New Realism to the philosophic world its exponents are most anxious that their doctrine be considered "not an accident, nor a *tour de force*, nor an isolated and curious speculative eruption. Whatever may be thought of its correctness or power to endure, it must at least be accorded a place [they say] in the main current of modern thought. It is a fundamental and typical doctrine—definable in terms of broad play of intellectual forces, and peculiarly characteristic of their present conjunction."<sup>1</sup> On the questions: Has New Realism made any valuable contribution to philosophy? Does it deserve recognition as an original system? we must reserve judgment until after our critical study.

The crucial problem in philosophy to-day is the problem of knowledge, and it is the pretended solution of this problem that constitutes the nucleus of New Realism, which its authors claim is "primarily a doctrine concerning the relation between the knowing process and the thing known."<sup>2</sup> Although "the present realistic movement . . . finds the clarification of current notions a proper and congenial

<sup>1</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*.

task,"<sup>3</sup> we warn the reader to be prepared to give up *pro tem* the traditional meanings of many everyday concepts and to do violence to established habits of thought, otherwise he will find himself in a maze of startling statements which, if interpreted in the light of the old meanings, will confuse him to such an extent that New Realism will never be even hazily understood. Professor Pitkin substantiates this statement when he says: "Reconstruction must begin; and a theory of life and mind must be worked out which dispenses with the old, discredited categories of idealistic psychology, such as 'mental states,' 'subject-object polarity,' 'creative synthesis,' and the like. Now it is evident that the first attempts to slough off these notions will be not only difficult, but full of strange writhings. They will be no less violent than an endeavor to exchange the parts of speech in one's native tongue and to use nouns for adverbs, or adverbs for prepositions. For the older manner of thinking is woven into our unconscious 'universes of discourse.' Because of this, any genuinely realistic hypothesis of consciousness to-day must be obscure; and it is almost certain to contain difficulties which the author himself cannot clearly sense. It must, therefore, be submitted in fear and trembling."<sup>4</sup>

As New Realism in its constructive phase is a return to Naïve Realism, its exponents give this advice: "To understand its [New Realism's] meaning it is necessary to go back . . . far back to that primordial common sense which believes in a world that exists independently of the knowing of it, but

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 377, 378.

believes also that that same independent world can be directly presented in consciousness and not merely represented or copied by 'ideas.' ”<sup>5</sup> It will be noted that in contradistinction to all subjectivists, the New Realists maintain a universe existentially independent of its being known, and in agreement with the naïve realists, they hold the direct presentation of it in consciousness. Their position is not a new one, for the old realists too adopt the point of view of common sense in their philosophical inquiries. Had they any other outlook than this, it would necessitate their being called by some other name. The beliefs of common sense constitute the data with which any realist begins to philosophize. Now, the ordinary person believes in real men, real women, real children, real friends, real buildings, real flowers, real water, real dogs, real fruit, and so forth, which have an existence and nature of their own, and are in consequence both independent of and external to himself. He never for one moment doubts the possibility of knowing persons and objects when they are brought into relation with him. He regards himself, therefore, as distinct from these real things, a being with thoughts, feelings, emotions, volitions that belong to him alone. Never, even momentarily, does he think that his thoughts about events and people are known to others unless he, himself, reveals them by some kind of communication—a fact which, as we shall see later, the New Realists overlook. But the ordinary man does not deny the existence of other beings possessing like activities and like secrecy to their mental functions. Gener-

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

ally speaking, he believes also in a Being above him and all the universe. With the exception of the last one, all his beliefs appear to be natural and spontaneous, in fact, instinctive. It is from such data, that is, belief in his own existence, an objective and material world and other beings like himself, that the Epistemologist must start his philosophizing. All who lay claim to the name Realist meet on common ground. In his essay, *A Realistic Theory of Independence*, Professor Perry gives further emphasis, though tinged with materialism, to the New Realists' doctrine of the independence of the universe when he says, "It [New Realism] is in sympathy with the whole modern trend of thought toward identifying reality with the elements, processes, and systems of experience. But it maintains that these elements, processes, and systems are *independent of being experienced*. Although they may compose or enter into an experience, they *need* not do so. In other words, neo-realism asserts the independence of the experienced on the act of experience; or of the sensible and intelligible properties of things on the operations of sensation and intellection." \*

The independence of the universe, that is, its absolute independence of the knowing process, so that experiencing makes no difference to facts, is the main contention of the New Realists; and a study of the independent objective entities which constitute the objective conditions of knowledge, is the all important factor in their solution of the knowledge problem. Maintaining that the great majority of

\* *Op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.

philosophers have neglected the problem of objective entities, they concentrate their energies on its solution, with the result that the objective entities in the universe become Omnipotent, and the subjective factors are completely ignored. Nothing to them exists that is different in nature from space, or time, or physical objects. In consequence they are Epistemological Monists, and since they are, just what do they mean by knowledge? To put it in their own words, " . . . being known is something that *happens* to a preëxisting thing. The characters of that preëxisting thing determine what happens when it is known. . . . When the knowing takes place, these characters are at least for the most part undisturbed. If they are disturbed, or modified, then the modification itself has to be explained in terms of certain original characters, as conditions of the modification." <sup>7</sup> Knowledge, then, to the exponents of this new solution of the knowledge problem, is not a vital action of the knowing subject, not a particular kind of being, but a "something" that occurs to an object. Knowledge to them is in the thing known and not an attribute of the knowing subject. With them it is not a particular kind of relation, a causal relation between a subject knowing and a known object, but a "something" which we can best explain as a reality added to a knowable thing, because of its being in an environment where a living being is interacting with other things. The knower, however, does not differ in nature from the object known. The thing is known directly, the content of consciousness is the very

<sup>7</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 34.



thing itself and not something subjective. In other words, the content is numerically identical with the known object, and not something mental. For the New Realists mental entities as such do not exist. Everything is objective—in the field of observation. This being one of their main tenets, all knowledge is reduced to terms of the objects of knowledge. "For the realist there are empirical grounds for holding that the object known is independent of and may be dissimilar to the cognitive process. Cognition can be eliminated. . . . Accordingly, the realist is an open-minded empiricist. He stands quite ready to find and to admit that anything may be a fact, that any kind of entity may exist or subsist. The only limitations are *a posteriori*. For the realist the study of the knowing process is only one of the many fields of investigation."<sup>8</sup>

Due to this belief, the New Realists look upon the knowledge process as something unimportant, as not eliciting a special study, an activity that must take its place in one manifold with the things it knows. "Knowing, consciousness, etc.," Professor Montague says, "are facts to be investigated only in the same way as are other facts, and are not necessarily more important than are other facts."<sup>9</sup> Realizing the impossibility of eliminating absolutely the knower, Professor Holt modifies the statement thus: "It will not do to ignore the fact of knowledge itself. Sooner or later, the knower must take himself into the account and become conscious of that inward relation to a subjective background which, in the first objective or outward intent of

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 480.



knowledge, is naturally overlooked. Realism is not a naïve or blind neglect of the problem. If realism concludes, as it does, that the knower himself may, in the great majority of cases, be disregarded, and the object be explained in its own terms, it is only after due consideration of the matter. The right so to disregard the subjective conditions of knowledge is an achievement of critical reflection.”<sup>10</sup> Professor Spaulding is in perfect agreement with this quoted passage when he says, “Realism, while admitting the tautology that every entity which is known is in relation to knowing or experience or consciousness, holds that this knowing, etc., is eliminable, so that the entity is known as it would be if the knowing were not taking place. Briefly, the entity is, in its being, behavior, and character, independent of the knowing . . . entities are knowable without being known.”<sup>11</sup> It is evident from these passages that the New Realists deny any subjective conditions to knowledge. In their over-eagerness to disprove the main tenet of Subjectivism, that consciousness conditions being, that experiencing makes a difference to facts, they revert to the other extreme and maintain that the knower is an unnecessary entity.

Is there no difference, we ask the New Realists, in the nature of the knower and the object known? Here is their answer: “The difference between knower and known is like the difference between bodies, or states of consciousness, or societies, or colors, or any grouping of things whatsoever in the respect that they must be brought into one field of

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478.

study, and observed in their mutual transactions.”<sup>12</sup> Let us analyze this statement by means of a concrete example and get its significance. Suppose on the desk before me is a pink rose in a vase. As it is in the same environment with me, I become conscious of its being there, my nature being the same as that of the rose. Or, perhaps, it would be more exact to say that the “I,” conscious of the existing rose on the desk, is the physical organism which reacts as a cognitive reagent to this object, pink rose, in the cognitive field. This organism which adjusted itself to the pink flower is, like the environment, four-dimensional. “The reaction is [however] not a simple duplicate of the physical circumstances inducing it.”<sup>13</sup> To use Professor Pitkin’s illustration, “If I see a box three feet long and two feet deep, I do not become a box three feet long and two feet deep.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, the “stimulus pattern” and the reaction are different. Since consciousness with the New Realists is a function of the physical organism, it involves the operation of an organic structure which adjusts itself to its environment, or, to express it differently, it reacts to the relation which is, however, not a spatio-temporal relation, but a real relation, one of implication.

Now that we have acquired a general but indeterminate notion of the theory of knowledge as presented by the New Realists, let us examine it more in detail. We have seen that knowledge to them is a relation not between mind—a spiritual entity—and an object, but between the physical organism—a material entity—and the object. Why such a

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem.*

different conception of knowledge? Do they not agree with the Scholastics as to the composition of man? Professor Perry answers this question thus: ". . . the same elements compose both mind and body; and . . . these common elements embrace both sense *qualia* and also logical abstractions."<sup>15</sup> It is evident from this statement that the New Realists conceive man to be constituted of only one principle whose nature is material. With this materialistic conception of man, they could not offer other than an unnatural and far-fetched solution of the knowledge problem. Despite the fact that they are avowed students of the world as it is, they fail to see that every experienced fact rather proves than disproves that man is composed of two principles, the one material, the other immaterial. How is it possible for New Realism to explain even sensuous memory, which is so necessary to knowledge, with only the material principle, mind, being considered a function of the nervous organism? How can you or I explain our recognition of an event in which we participated, say ten years ago, and which is now recalled to us by some friend, if the elements which compose the body and mind of man are both material? Is not a psychical as well as a physical basis necessary to explain it? Can recognition be accounted for on a physiological basis alone? Why the traditional distinction of names, "body" and "mind," if their content expresses a principle and a function with the same nature?

We have already referred to the fact, and shall later prove it, that the term "mind" is not given

<sup>15</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 311.

by the New Realists to a principle, but to a special function of the nervous organism, and it is the relation of the object with this particular portion of man that constitutes knowledge. In answer to the question which he himself proposes as to whether the individual organism of any plant or animal is "anything *more* than just a *specific* physico-chemical complex, specifically different, of course, from other physico-chemical complexes which are organisms,"<sup>16</sup> Professor Spaulding has this to say: "One traditional vague theory, that of the older vitalists, holds to the existence in an organism of a vital force, or energy, but this entity has never been discovered experimentally. However, quite evidently, did it exist, it would not make the organism non-mechanistic. For *energy* is subject to mechanical principles. A vital energy would at best but add only one more mechanistic element to that complex which is the organism."<sup>17</sup> It seems to us that the retention of the word "mind" with an entirely different content only adds a new difficulty to the interpretation of New Realism's theory of knowledge. Mind has always been used to express an entity different in nature from the body of man, and by the Scholastics it is held to be capable of operations of both the sensuous and supra-sensuous order. Since the New Realists consider mind a function of the body they put it in the category, accident. In fact, so strongly are they opposed to substance, that Professor Perry says "the principle of substance betrays realism into the hands of its enemy,"<sup>18</sup> adding that the alliance of "traditional realism" with substantialism has both

<sup>16</sup> *New Realism*, p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

confused and compromised it. The utter rejection of the notion of substance by New Realism is one of the causes for its solution of the knowledge problem being directly opposed to the natural and common sense view of things which it so emphatically contends is its position.

Man, then, is on a par with the other entities in the universe; and in the knowledge problem, he is non-essential. While he may play a part, it is only minor, and after a succession of reactions to the stimuli, he may withdraw. The all important factors in the knowledge problem are the objective conditions. The New Realists are insistent on the absolute independence of the knowable objects in the knowing relation. Professor Pitkin says: "The realist holds that things known are not products of the knowing relation nor essentially dependent for their existence or behavior upon that relation."<sup>19</sup> Professor Montague expresses the same thought with the additional observation that the object of knowledge is in no wise modified, ". . . things may pass in and out of the cognitive relation without prejudice to their reality . . . the existence of a thing is not correlated with or dependent upon the fact that anybody experiences it, perceives it, conceives it, or is in any way aware of it."<sup>20</sup> Again, Professor Holt tells us that, "the being and nature of these entities are in no sense conditioned by their being known."<sup>21</sup>

We are in hearty accord with the dogmatic stand of the New Realists on the independence of the knowable objects in their existence, and the non-

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 472.



modification of them in the knowing process. For knowledge does not directly affect reality as such, still less does it constitute it. My awareness of the paper before me neither gives it existence nor determines its color, size, etc. Reality in any of its forms may enter the field of observation and so become an object of experience, but it does not become an integral part of experience. To put it in other words, the content of perception or of thought, being in part the product of that reality and in part the product of our minds, may be considerably modified by our cognitive activities. But the objective reality which we seek to know is not modified by its being known. We think of the object through and in the idea. The ideas, therefore, are the instruments of knowledge, and as such are not the objects, but rather functions of the mind which enable us to think of objects. With the New Realists "when things are known, they *are* ideas of the mind. They may enter *directly* into the mind; and when they do, they become what are called 'ideas.' So that ideas are only things in a certain relation; or, things, in respect of being known, are ideas." <sup>22</sup>

Since we maintain the immateriality of the mind, we deny that "when perceived, things are directly and identically present in consciousness," <sup>23</sup> that is, numerically present in the mind. It is true that we know directly the object and not its representation in the mind, but this is not the New Realist's intended meaning of the excerpt. According to Scholasticism, when a physical object in the external

<sup>22</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 308.

<sup>23</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 143.



world is brought into relation with the knowing subject, it impresses itself upon the proper sense, and is received according to the mode of the receiver of the action. Since the nature of the recipient of the action is different from the object there is no exact correspondence, that is, identity between the sensation and the thing. An object is identical only with itself, for identity means oneness of substance. As the action of the knower is complementary to that of the knowable, the particular form which the effect takes is determined by the activity of the cause, the knowable, and the specific nature is determined by the knower. The formal characteristics of the object known, not the material ones, are immanently present to the knower.

While Scholasticism admits the independence of the objects of knowledge, it regards them as dependent on God, a supreme and all-powerful Being Whose existence and essence are underived. God, therefore, is the Ground of the universe, which, however, is not identical with but just a far-off copy of Him from Whom it proceeds, and by Whom it is conserved in existence. This created universe consists of finite individuals, each with its own nature and existence. Metaphysically, in these things there is a real distinction between the substance and the accidents which in the concrete, combine to form integral and real wholes. They are substances in so far as they exist *per se*, and are differentiated from one another by qualities or accidents in virtue of which they both act and are acted upon. The substance of the thing determines in general the species of its accidents, and external causes may determine

them in detail. The universe is a rational systematic whole, consisting of living and non-living concrete, individual wholes, each existing in and by itself, but not of itself; each distinct from the other, yet interacting with the others. Therefore, a change in any one individual will entail a change in a few at least of the other existing parts of the universe.

We differentiated the individuals of the universe into living and non-living organisms. It is evident that the former are differentiated from the latter by the fact that they move themselves, act upon and perfect themselves. Their essential characteristics, therefore, are spontaneity and immanence, as opposed to inertia and transitive activity of non-living things. According to the different degrees of spontaneity manifested in their vital action, living beings may be classified in three grades. Since this vital action issues in consequence of the formal or dynamic principle, called the soul, it is the grade of this substantial form that is the foundation for the classification. The vital principles in plants and brutes are wholly dependent upon matter in their action, and consequently in their beginning and in their existence; hence they are material forms. Whereas the vital principle or soul in man is independent of matter in its higher characteristic functions. Man in his origin, existence, and destiny is the highest of these three grades of living being. Uniting in himself matter and spirit, man may be looked upon as a little universe in himself. He is, therefore, essentially different from any other grade of living organism, by the fact that his substantial form is essentially different from the forms of other indi-

viduals of the living type. His soul is spiritual and is the result of an immediate creative act of God, upon Whom all finite beings are ultimately dependent for their original existence and continued existence.

Man, however, like other finite beings, is independent of finite knowers, in that both he and they have their existence and nature despite any finite experience. But this independence is not to be understood in an absolute sense. For there is no existent finite substance that does not in some degree depend upon the action of another finite substance for its being, and upon others also for certain modifications. Hence it is in a relative sense that the term "independence" is used in Scholasticism. Among the individuals in both the organic and the inorganic kingdoms there is not one that can be said to be sufficient unto itself. Even man, the highest of the creatures of God, is no exception. He is not an isolated being, but stands in relation to every other being that comes within his environment, and in consequence is modified in some way by them, and feels the need of certain things for his perfection, be they physical, mental, or moral. Thus changes are wrought in him, varying in nature according to the kind of being which causes them. And man in turn by his activity, other than the knowing process, effects changes in the universe.

With this outlook of the Scholastic's world, let us now consider the universe of the New Realists. With them the world in which we live is peopled with beings "physical, mental and logical, proposi-

tions and terms, existent and non-existent, false and true, good and evil, real and unreal" <sup>24</sup> that "*subsist*" in their own right. Professor Montague uses "the term 'subsistent' to denominate *any one of the actual and possible objects of thought*," <sup>25</sup> real and unreal. We understand him to mean by "real subsistents" those entities which belong to the one coherent spatio-temporal system of nature and are capable of causing a consciousness of themselves in other subsistents; and by "unreal subsistents" those which have no place in the spatio-temporal system and lack causal efficiency. These "entities of the universe," he says, "have no substance," <sup>26</sup> but should this concept be necessary to understand the universe he suggests that "neutral substance" be employed, which means something neither "physical" nor "mental." These individual subsistent objects the New Realists say are the constituents of a spatio-temporal world of four dimensions, if the temporal element is considered a fourth dimension of space. As revealed by factual analysis these component objects are all manifolds of three ultimates, space, time and quality, that is to say, each is a quality-group occupying a definite amount of space at some definite time. They distinguish these quality-groups into four types of wholes. Aggregate wholes, the first type, are collections of miscellaneous objects, such as this typewriter, paper, my thoughts, pen, chair, etc., considered as grouped. Wholes of the second type are assemblages of similar individuals, as oxygen, American, cat, flower, etc. These, they

<sup>24</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

say, "are designated by so-called universals, by generic and abstract terms, terms with an extension and an intension."<sup>27</sup> The third type of wholes are those which can be analyzed into subordinate classes, such as element, number, each of which can be subdivided into classes. The fourth type of whole, organic whole, includes organisms and any specific quantity of any specific chemical compound. Experimental analysis, that is, a discovery of the component parts of an entity, reveals in this type of wholes something above the properties of its parts, a something that is both qualitatively and quantitatively different. Analysis, therefore, brings out not only the parts of the whole, but the "organizing relations." It is the way the parts are synthesized that accounts for the kind of whole, and not the properties of the parts, nor is it the additive result of the parts, for the whole possesses new characteristic properties, not in the parts. Both living and non-living physical and chemical wholes are of this sort. The ultimate simple whole is, of course, excepted.

Is it possible that New Realism does not recognize an essential difference between living and non-living things? Is there no special entity in organic "complexes" that is absent from inorganic wholes? The organism, the exponents of this theory maintain, "consists of cells, of colloidal particles in solution, of molecules, of atoms, and of electrons."<sup>28</sup> The lower and higher types are distinguished by the number of properties possessed, the simplest having

<sup>27</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>28</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 243.



the least. Like the inorganic physico-chemical complex, an organism is a mechanism with parts synthetically related in accordance with certain "constants," that is, laws. Now it is the manner of this organic relation of parts that makes each class of chemical compounds, peculiar and specific, and therefore different in some aspects from every other compound entity. There is no reason, the New Realists contend, to bring in a special entity to explain these facts in the non-living, and since it is unnecessary for this realm of being, it is equally a superfluous entity in the living things. The only difference between the living and the non-living, they insist, is a difference in "specificity." As we understand it, "specificity" is the effect of the way the parts of the complex are synthesized, and it is this which characterizes the different classes of complexes. In other words each group or class is distinguished by a determinate pattern or order system which gives us a criterion of individuation and enables us to distinguish between this thing and that. Among these living complexes, there are certain organisms which can become conscious of the entities in their environment. This awareness, however, does not need the existence of some special entity, like an "entelechy," for this specific character can arise in certain organisms under definite conditions. It develops in a peculiar "organic situation." "This awareness may occur," writes Professor Spaulding, "and it is good realism to admit that it may, but, if it does, it is to be distinguished from a special entity like an 'entelechy,' which is held to persist and control and direct, and to *explain* both



accomplished end and 'creative synthesis.'"<sup>29</sup> Professor Holt in referring to consciousness in its content has this to say, "I believe . . . that no content is 'constituted' by a metaphysical knower or ego, for I believe that no knower, or ego, such as metaphysics means, exists."<sup>30</sup> Man, therefore, who is a living organism differs only accidentally from the brute, plants, and from the minerals, chemical compounds, and so forth, in the inorganic realm. What crass materialism!

It is evident that the greatness of man, who gives evidence of the divine power as no other finite being does, has escaped the mind of the New Realists. "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"<sup>31</sup> Thus speaks Shakespeare in the person of Hamlet. The producer of characters that live because they act in accordance with human nature grasped the essence of man, which the collaborators of New Realism failed to find. And why? May we not safely say, because they used the wrong kind of analysis, namely experimental analysis which at its best can discover only physical parts? In other words they used physical partition instead of intellectual analysis. They transposed to philosophy the attitude of science toward facts. It is difficult for us to conceive professors in philosophy with the point of view of the everyday man, offering an explanation of man so

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>31</sup> Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, Riverside Series, p. 65.

offensive to reason. It is obvious that the New Realists neglected to utilize the observed facts revealed in their study of the activities of man, some of which are essentially different from those of other organic beings, and all of which are at complete variance with the finite inorganic individuals. Surely these observable facts can be explained only by the existence of a principle in man sufficient to be the source or cause of these effects. For that "every effect must have an adequate, efficient cause;" and that "nothing can be in the effect which is not in the cause," are two fundamental truths which must be accepted by every fair-minded person, who has analyzed their terms.

We ask the New Realists how the mere special relationship of parts in an organism can be the cause of such immaterial operations as attention, judgment, reflection, self-consciousness, the formation of concepts, and the processes of reasoning. How can an accidental material arrangement of parts account for an effect essentially different in nature? Can we hoodwink ourselves into believing that it sizes up with an adequate efficient cause? It can no more be the source of the supra-sensuous activities of man than a wasp can be the cause of a Gothic cathedral. The arrangement of the parts of an organism can at best produce a property belonging to the whole which is material; and since any complex, no matter to which realm it belongs, is a mere quality-group, how can a unity of accidents produce an entity spiritual in nature?

Let us analyze just one intellectual activity, self-consciousness. Doctor Maher defines it as "*the*

*knowledge which the mind has of its acts as its own.*" <sup>32</sup> In the act of self-consciousness there occurs the turning back of an indivisible agent upon itself. There is the recognition by the agent of an absolute identity between himself thinking about something and himself reflecting on that thinking self. The mind is at once subject and object. Now an action of this nature is not merely unlike the known attributes of the body, but is in open conflict with all the fundamental characteristics of matter. True, we do find one part of a material substance acting upon another, but it is repugnant to all that experience or science teaches that one atom can act upon itself. This being a certainty of common sense, the open-minded person must be convinced that the reflex operation manifested in the act of self-consciousness calls for the existence in man of a principle which in some of its activities, at least, is essentially independent of the body. If further evidence is needed to disprove the contention of the New Realists that no psychical entity is needed to explain consciousness, we call their attention to so elemental a form of awareness as the internal sensation, hunger. There must be something in man more than the mere organic relation of the parts of the body to account for the awareness of the uneasy feelings of the alimentary canal, and this something cannot be organic in its nature.

As we have already discovered, the world of the New Realists is composed of entities which are simply a collection of qualities united by certain

<sup>32</sup> *Psychology*, p. 361.

relations. From the most complex of animate beings down to the simplest of inanimate, all are quality-groups. In this belief they are Humean. And since qualities are but the actualizations of substance, which they deny, they substantialize accidents. For qualities are determinants, and since they are, they must determine something, and the something is called by Scholastics, substance. The concept substance which we find realized in the individuals that we call things, and in our own being, is not a figment of the mind, connoting an immutable, hidden, unknowable substrate of separate ever-changing accidents, but a reality whose mode of being does not imply inherence in another being for its existence, and whose nature is revealed in and through its changing states and accidents. It is that which is subject to accidental change but persists the same throughout the change. Not every reality that exists and is knowable is a substance. The formal objects of the senses, both primary and secondary, are realities which, being determinations of something which we call substance, are accidents by the fact that in order to exist they must ordinarily inhere in something else. We hold that the New Realists are denying an evident fact, which the everyday person takes for granted. When we purchase apples, for instance, we certainly do not ask for a quantity of quality-groups. By the very fact that we ask for apples, and not red-hard-sweet, etc., the statement that no objects in the universe are substances, is disproved. How do these accidents hang together? Can mere relationship effect this? We fail to see how any qualities can exist except as being

modifications of something, and the something is the substance. To us, therefore, who are realists too, the entities in the universe from the point of view of the mode of existence must be distinguished intellectually into those which exist in and by themselves, substances, and those which naturally inhere in something other than themselves, accidents. In our world there is no existence of quality-groups as such; substance and accidents form a structural whole.

The New Realists may be said to have substance-phobia, so strong is their fear of the idea substance. In the knowledge problem, they offer as a substitute for substance and accident, the theory of external relations. Their mechanico-biological point of view accounts for their denial of an essential difference between a living body and a non-living body. They contend that mass in motion is the only factor required to explain the activities of nature. Among the bodies they recognize different degrees of complexity, but all are composed of homogeneous atoms which work in exactly the same way and can be understood by means of the same principles. This mechanistic interpretation of the universe has already been attacked and disproved by us, as we found it to be at variance not only with the beliefs of the man of common sense, but also with the just claims of reason. Such an explanation of the universe can but consider the categories "end," and "cause," except the efficient, useless.

We agree with the New Realists, however, in their contention that the objects of knowledge are in their nature and existence independent of the knowing

process, and that the objects are distinct from one another. In other words, we believe with them in a universe of a plurality of things; but that they differ only in degree and not in kind, we deny. We hold that the distinction between mind and body, subject and object, is final and absolute. We cannot accept their monistic conception of reality. Besides the world of "real subsistents" or "existents," the New Realists postulate a world of "unreal subsistents." The latter part of reality includes logical and mathematical entities, errors, evil, which are not purely corporeal substances, nor mental, but "neutral" substances, objective and independent of the mind which knows them. In this respect the New Realists are modified Platonic realists. This world of "unreal subsistents" must be recognized, they hold, in order to have a complete idea of the universe. The only reason that we can see for New Realism's world of "unreal subsistents" is the desire of some of the exponents of this new theory to escape being classified as materialists.



## CHAPTER VII

### NEW REALISM: CONCEPT OF MIND

We have seen in the preceding chapter, that the knowable world of the New Realists is a pluralistic universe of "real subsistents" or "existents," and "unreal subsistents" or "subsistents" independent of one another and of an experiencing mind. The former group includes physical and "mental" complex aggregates, and the latter logical and mathematical manifolds. With the New Realists an analysis of things into their simpler components reveals them to be fundamentally the same in substance. In truth they have no substance. It is only to satisfy those who insist that substance exists that the New Realist speaks of substance at all, and he calls it "neutral stuff." As to its nature Professor Holt gives this information: "What this is, is found in the last analysis to be an idle or indeed a meaningless inquiry . . . owing to the habit of demanding that everything shall have a substance, an almost insurmountable habit of thought, I have resorted to the merely expository convenience of calling this class a stuff. There is a sacrifice in exactness, which can be borne in mind, but an immense gain, I believe, in communicability. . . . I fully realize that the term comes thereby to denote everything and hence to

connote nothing, but we can spare the term scientifically, for, in fact, nothing is that is not a neutral aggregate. We *need* not, therefore, connote anything by it.”<sup>1</sup> And the New Realists stand for a clarification and a definite meaning of all philosophical terms!

The universe, according to Professor Holt’s logical interpretation, is a “neutral mosaic,” the dissimilarities of its individual mosaics being due not to the supposed differences of substance, but to differences purely of form or complexity. These mosaics form a simple-complex hierarchy of neutral entities, the simple being the “abstract” fundamentals. Ranging from these along a complexity series are logical and mathematical manifolds, physical, chemical, inorganic, organic and conscious manifolds, and the subject matter of psychology, anthropology, political economy, government, and ethnology. Note carefully the position of consciousness on the complexity series ladder. The more complex an entity is, the more concrete and particular. “The more complex an object . . . is, the more particular are its parts.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, “The complex *are* the simpler with an additional determination.”<sup>3</sup> We have seen already that this “additional determination” is a property resulting from the way the simple entities are arranged.

“Physical bodies,” Professor Holt holds, “are analysable into neutral entities, with no residue left over such as was once called ‘Matter.’ . . . ‘Matter’ does not exist.”<sup>4</sup> He continues, “. . . real objects

<sup>1</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 160.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

about us . . . are not 'Matter'; they are just objects, while 'Matter' is the stuff that philosophy has declared these objects to be made of: it was conceived as the hidden and unattainable bearer of the colours, sounds, smells, motions, energies and masses which alone were the immediate objects of our experience." <sup>5</sup> Again, "'Matter,' indeed, is not the reality about us, but a philosophical misconception, the inexperienceable substratum supposed to bear the phenomena. None of us ever walked on it, swam in it, or in any wise touched it. *This 'Matter' exists not.*" <sup>6</sup> "This Matter" to which Professor Holt denies existence corresponds to our substance. From these quoted passages, it becomes strikingly evident that he is either entirely ignorant of or else wilfully misinterprets the Scholastic conception of substance. With him and his collaborators, we reject as absurd any philosophic notion of substance which holds that the color, size, odor, etc., of a rose are engrafted as it were on something that is hidden from the percipient agent. On the contrary, however, we hold that the color, size, odor, etc., are the qualities, the actualities of a substance which we call a rose. They do not constitute the physical object but exist in the physical object. In other words, the rose is not an aggregation of them, but a colored-odorous-sized material substance. Over and over again, the New Realists assert that any entity is only an aggregation of accidents, and it is right here that they prove themselves to be phenomenologists, Humean. Professor Perry substanti-

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

ates this when he says, "Modern realism is closer to the monistic realism of 'ideas' suggested by Hume, than to the dualistic realism of mind and matter, propounded by the Scottish School."<sup>7</sup>

Maintaining both matter and mind to be neutral aggregates and therefore one in substance, Professor Holt says, ". . . the physical world . . . is no more outside of the mind or severed from it by a 'yawning chasm' than is the number system."<sup>8</sup> What then is the nature of mind? According to Professor Holt, "Both matter and mind consist of the same elemental stuff";<sup>9</sup> they are both "neutral aggregates."<sup>10</sup> In other words, "A mind or consciousness is a class or group of entities within the subsisting universe, as a physical object is another class or group."<sup>11</sup> Professor Perry expresses the same idea when he says, "Neither mind nor body is really simple; although common sense and philosophical tradition have conspired to make them appear so."<sup>12</sup> It is evident that the New Realist's conception of the mind is diametrically opposed to ours. We understand mind to be a simple, spiritual substance, distinct from matter and capable of existing apart from material substance. It is the subject of mental life. If employed in a broad sense, that is, synonymously with soul, it is the ultimate source of all the activities of man. It is not a function as New Realism contends, but the ultimate principle of all the manifold functions or activities of the living human

<sup>7</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup> *New Realism*, p. 373.

<sup>12</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 310.

organism, such as nutrition, locomotion, reproduction, sensation, memory, imagination, thought, feeling, emotion, and willing. Even the slightest reasoning upon mental experience forces us to assert the mind to be a reality, which exists in and by itself—the self-subsistent principle in man remaining unchanged throughout all bodily changes. Is it possible to imagine love without concomitantly imagining someone who loves? It is an absolute impossibility to conceive changes in man unless something remains unchanged. Surely the feeling of sadness cannot change to one of joy unless some one who was sad, now is joyful. Again, the unity of consciousness testifies to the existence of this unchangeable principle in man. Unless there is an abiding subject around which to group thoughts, emotions, experiences, they can have no meaning. How explain the evident fact of knowing, feeling, and willing, if there be not some person who knows, who feels, who wills? These and the various other operations of man are the result of neither his body alone, nor his soul alone, but of the two; for man is a unit and not two substances between which there is no interaction. In other words, the mind and the body are in substantial union, and not, as Descartes held, in accidental union. It was in consequence of this assumption that he maintained there could be no communication of any kind whatsoever between the two principles.

New Realism rejects not only Cartesianism but also Interactionism. It denies even the existence of such an entity as the soul. Professor Holt says,

" . . . the soul or spirit . . . that sits in awful isolation and receives its own unique sensations, which nevertheless somehow 'represent' heaven alone knows what that is outside, is the veriest hocus-pocus." <sup>13</sup> In fact, the doctrine of the soul is treated by the New Realist as some ridiculous fancy, some childish fairy tale. " . . . I [Professor Holt] have undertaken to show on epistemological grounds that there is no ghost, that the house of the brain is not haunted." <sup>14</sup> What a relief to mankind to know that it is not the habitation of a mysterious, "spooky" being! And to read a positive declaration of it written by no less a person than a philosopher. Poor tradition-bound humanity, at last some one has come to your rescue, and from henceforward you are freed from the effects of an illusion that has fettered you! Now you can live in happy security; so would the New Realists assure you. But can you? We shall see later. It is regrettable, indeed, that we cannot enjoy this release, too, but must still cling to the "so-called" existent being, the soul. It is true, of course, that the soul is located not in the whole brain nor in any fixed part of the brain, but is, owing to its simplicity, whole and entire in the whole body, and whole and entire in each part of the body. For "the soul is an immaterial energy which, though not constituted of separate principles or parts alongside of parts, is yet capable of exercising its virtue throughout an extended subject. Such a reality does not, like a material entity, occupy different parts of space by different parts of its own mass.

<sup>13</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 110.    <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.



. . . Its presence in the body is not that of an extended object the different parts of which fill and are *circumscribed* by corresponding areas of space, but of an immaterial energy exerting its proper activities ubiquitously throughout the living body. As it does not possess extension, it is not susceptible of *contact* after a quantitative matter, yet it puts forth its peculiar virtue, and acts with the same efficiency as if it possessed a surface capable of juxtaposition with that of a material body.”<sup>15</sup> The New Realist is arguing, however, not against giving a fixed place to the soul in the body, but against the very existence of such an entity as the soul.

Mind being the same in composition as physical entities, the New Realists contend that like the latter, it, too, is in the open field of knowledge and is therefore observable by all. “Mind lies in the open field of experience, having its own typical form and mode of action, but, so far as knowledge of it is concerned, as generally accessible, as free to all comers, as the motions of stars or the civilization of cities.”<sup>16</sup> We admit that the external manifestations, such as speech, gesture, moral actions, works of art, etc., can be known directly by any percipient agent, but we deny that the nature of mind, as a cognitive faculty, can be known except by introspection supplemented by the objective method. Mind as an entity is within the body, and may from this point of view be called the “mind within” whereas some of its activities being external realities may be called

<sup>15</sup> Maher: *Psychology*, pp. 562, 563.

<sup>16</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 273.

the "mind without." With the New Realists this distinction consequent upon a different understanding of mind really amounts to the assertion that there are two parts to the mind, which united constitute the *whole* mind. Again the materialistic note is dominant. That the New Realist does not comprehend Scholastic teaching is evident in this passage from the pen of Professor Perry: "Thus we reach the widely popular view that mind is encased in a non-mental and impenetrable shell, within which it may cherish the secret of its own essence without ever being disturbed by inquisitive intruders. . . . It is curious that if its exterior is impenetrable a mind should give such marked evidence of itself as to permit the safest inferences as to its presence within. It is curious, too, that such an inward mind should forever be making sallies into the neighborhood without being caught or followed back into its retreat. It must evidently be supplied with means of egress that bar ingress, with orifices of outlook that are closed to one who seeks to look in."<sup>17</sup> True, if mind were a corporeal substance within the fortress, the body, in order to manifest itself it would be obliged to come out and then return. The idea of its not being observed by any one during its time out would be ridiculous, and the New Realist's playful treatment of it would be justly warranted. But since mind, as we conceive it, is a simple, spiritual substance that vivifies and vitalizes every operation of the composite entity it does not need to sally forth, but manifests its

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 274.

existence in its external activities. A study of them reveals its nature.

What is the generic character of the contents of our mind? In other words, to which class do these contents exclusively belong? The New Realist answers, they "exhibit *no* generic character. I find the quality 'blue,' but this I ascribe also to the book which lies before me on the table; I find 'hardness,' but this I ascribe also to the physical adamant; or I find number, which my neighbor finds also in his mind. In other words, the elements of the introspective manifold are in themselves neither peculiarly mental nor peculiarly mine; they are *neutral* and *interchangeable*." <sup>18</sup> Since by genus is meant a class of things differentiated from another class by a specific difference, our mental contents have a generic character. For their status in the mind being *sui generis* they cannot be reduced to or identified with anything non-mental whose existence is always concrete and material. Furthermore, the fact that mental contents are a personal possession constitutes their specific difference, and consequently affirms that they are generic and peculiarly mine. The reason the New Realists deny privacy to mental contents and make them a public possession, is due to their identifying them with the objects of knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, how can "mental contents be neutral"? For neutral means to be neither the one nor the other, in this connection neither mental nor non-mental. If mental contents are neutral, they

<sup>18</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 277.

<sup>19</sup> Holt: *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 149.

are neither mental nor non-mental. This disjunction being complete, they are non-entities, which is an absurdity. Hence if mental contents possess any status in reality, they must be partly non-mental and partly mental.

The New Realists hold that mental content differs from physical nature only in the way its composing elements are grouped and inter-related. As compared with physical nature it is fragmentary; for while the contents of mind coincide element for element with natural objects, these physical entities do not enter wholly into the mind. . . . In other words the passive objects to which the nervous organism responds are the contents of mind, its peculiar action being the common unifying correlate of all the content. But we fail to see how it is possible to explain the individuality of mental contents in the sense of physical objects by relations; for relations do not constitute individuality, but presuppose it. We deny the supposition that mental contents constitute a manifold; they constitute a unit. In the mind, subject and attribute are identical. We deny, therefore, the further assumption that their ontological status is the same in nature as in the mind. If all differences in mental contents consist in a mere difference in grouping, then all ideas are essentially the same; for they would be but groups of simple elements differing only in quality and quantity; but this is absurd.

This connecting form or relation which is the defining principle of the group, New Realism calls consciousness. Now the term consciousness is employed

in the sense of either a substance or an accident. If the former it is synonymous with mind itself; if the latter, then since the relation is accidental and transitory, consciousness would also be accidental and transitory. Nothing more absurd could be imagined than that consciousness is merely the relation between the various elements of mental content as New Realism believes; and that my mental content may also be your mental content—my consciousness, your consciousness. Finally, a relation defines nothing; hence it cannot define consciousness; for definition deals with the essential, which is always something substantial. We deny also the statement that consciousness cannot be discovered by intuition. The mind can have immediate awareness of itself as acting and as agent having states. The testimony of mankind attests to this fact.

Mental action, the New Realists say, must be defined in terms of bodily activities themselves, and not as a "peculiar introspective complex." It is therefore prejudice, pure and simple, to say that no one can know his own mind except himself. No man's ideas are exclusively his, my ideas may be also your ideas; because just as an object may be the terminus of a cognitive relation, so that object thus related to your mind, in your mind, may be the terminus of a cognitive relation of another mind, and hence enter into his mind. In the words of Professor Perry, "The mere fact, then, that ideas are always included within some mind, and thereby excluded from what is altogether not that mind, contributes no evidence for the absolute privacy of



mind. Any group whatsoever is private, in the sense that what is in it cannot by definition be outside of it, nor what is outside of it in it. But this does not prevent what is inside of it from being *also* inside of something else, nor does it prevent the entire group from being inside of another like group. Everything depends on the particular nature of the groups in question.”<sup>20</sup> We are at variance with the New Realists again. Since experience shows that mental actions manifest properties contradictory to the properties of bodily activities, we deny even the possibility of defining mind in terms of bodily activities. For that a thing can act only according to its nature, is an axiom of common sense that applies here. As to man’s ideas not being exclusively his, we distinguish. Ideas may be viewed in an active and in a passive sense. In the latter sense, that is, as externally manifested in speech or writing, we agree that our ideas may be your ideas. But in the active sense, that is, as mental representations of reality unexpressed, we deny that our ideas are your ideas. Facts of experience contradict the New Realists’ contention. My mental content is exclusively mine, as your mental content is exclusively yours. It is true, of course, that our ideas can and do represent the same physical object, but this fact does not make my idea your idea. It only proves that we both can think about the same object, but we do not have numerically the same thought. Professor Perry’s example to prove that “my idea may also be your idea,” rather disproves it. “Friends,” he says,

<sup>20</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, pp. 287, 288.



"are essentially such as to belong to friends, and my friend is veritably mine; but he may, without contradiction, become yours also." <sup>21</sup> I agree that my friend may become your friend, but this sharing of the person, who is extra-mental to us both, does in nowise whatsoever make my idea of our mutual friend your idea, but makes evident that we both have an acquired relationship with one and the same person. Moreover, the degree of friendship which we have, may differ. Even the two conceptions of the term friendship may be opposed, according as one is true, the other false. If I accept St. Thomas Aquinas' definition there are three elements in friendship, namely, mutual esteem, mutual love, and a community of goods, such as exchange of confidences, sharing of each other's joys and sorrows; whereas, if your conception of it is based on elements other than these, then the content of our ideas will differ.

Although the New Realists admit that ideas are always within some mind, and are by that fact always excluded from what is altogether not that mind, they deny that it follows mind is absolutely private. Furthermore, they say what is inside of the mind may also be inside of something else, and this entire group may also be inside of another like group. Moreover, my idea can be telescoped by your idea of my idea. By this we understand that since the content of mind is identical numerically with the physical objects, then your knowing the same physical objects which I know, in knowing them

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 287.

therefore you know my ideas. New Realism concludes consistently we believe that minds are intersecting and not exclusive. But to what ridiculous conclusions does the belief in only the material principle in man lead the philosopher!

The fact that the content of mind can sometimes be successfully hidden from general observation, does not prove that it is essentially cut off from such observation, contends New Realism. We grant again that the external manifestations, such as gestures, facial expressions, bodily postures, the verbal or written communications which convey the content of man's ideas, are the movement indicators of the mind, and are what the observer knows, but we deny that in observing them he observes the mind. The most that he can infer from them is the state or frame of mind. Since man has the power, the freedom of will, to choose to act and speak contrariwise to the content of his mind, what the onlooker observes in such an instance is not even an external manifestation of the true content of mind. We think the facts of experience prove not only that mind is sometimes hidden from observation, but that it is always hidden. What is known are its movements alone; for the proper object of the senses is the particular concrete thing, that is a corporeal entity, and not the immaterial. Since mind is the latter, it can under no circumstance be in the open field of observation. As the New Realists conceive it to be nothing more than a cross-section of the universe, that is, the environment to which the nervous organism responds by some specific reaction,

naturally they contend not only that mind is in the field of observation, but that it can become the object. "The same soul or nervous system . . . might come to fill also the office of the object. Or, while a given entity was filling the office of subject in relation to an object, it might at the same time be itself filling the office of object in relation to a second subject. . . . Thus there is nothing whatsoever to stand in the way of the supposition that the bodily action wherewith I deal with things and make them my objects, may itself be similarly dealt with and made object by another bodily agent; or in supposing that the bodily process which in my own experience functions as mental action, and does not appear as content, should be the content of another mind." <sup>22</sup>

Conscious of the difficulties connected with its denial of the privacy of mental content, New Realism, after a discussion of the various mental activities which might refute its doctrine, attempts to show that these rather serve to prove that mind is in the field of observation. Professor Perry says that the "proprio-ceptive sensations," that is, sensations of the internal states of the body, being such cannot of course be known in the same way by an observer as by the subject of them; they are on that account considered by some philosophers as proof that mind can be known only by itself, and illustrate, moreover, the importance of introspective experiences in getting a knowledge of self or mind. But wrongly so, says Professor Perry. He does concede, however,

<sup>22</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

that "I alone can be specifically sensible of loss of equilibrium, because my semicircular canals, though visible and tangible to others, have a continuous nervous connection with my brain alone. More important is the fact that I am sensible in a very complex way of states and changes in my visceral, circulatory, and respiratory systems. Here, again, I am possessed of sensations from which other observers are cut off for lack of certain nerve fibers which connect these organs only with *my* cerebral centers." <sup>23</sup> But it must be observed, he continues, "that these sensations constitute knowledge of the body, and not of mind in the traditional sense." <sup>24</sup> We cannot infer from these facts, he contends, that proprio-ceptive sensations are unknowable to everyone but their possessors, but that whatever is in them, or is knowable about them anybody else can know. The way in which the one who "has" the internal sensations knows them differs, however, from the way in which the exterior observer knows them; the latter must know them by use of the imagination, whereas the former knows them directly by means of sensation. The New Realists are mistaken as to the process whereby our neighbors become cognizant of our internal sensations, for they know them not by the imagination but by reason, that operation of the soul whereby from two or more premisses a conclusion is drawn.

As internal sensations are not mine in an exclusive sense, so likewise the content of memory can be and is the object of my neighbor's knowledge,

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.*

maintains the New Realist. Memory to him implies a past event, a "mind" recalling it, and a connection between the two. This statement of its elements is true, but inadequate. Professor Perry holds memory to be possible because the original response of a nervous system to a stimulus "must be *continued into the present*,"<sup>25</sup> this being possible "only through the identity of the nervous system. The link of recollection, connecting past and present, lies in a retrospective functioning of my body, which can be accounted for only by its *history*. And this is as accessible as any natural or moral process."<sup>26</sup> The facts of my recollection of any past experience too are "in the context of your possible knowledge."<sup>27</sup> Professor Holt explains memory in a more detailed fashion. After an exhaustive attempt to show there is no subjective element in knowledge, he says, "I hope that I have sufficiently shown that knowledge is not 'here in the skull.' For the nervous system selects the entities that shall compose consciousness by responding specifically to them; and by means of its distance-receptors (eyes, ears, *et caetera*) it responds to entities at a distance. So too by a different mechanism it responds to events that are past. If the auditory stimulus of the name of a person who is dead causes a given nervous system to contract the tear-glands and so produce tears, it is by no means the mere acoustical energy transmitted to the ear that has done this; but a highly peculiar arrangement of nervous arcs that were so organized by past events, it is so-to-say 'stored stim-

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 296.<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 296.<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*



uli,' which only this peculiar configuration of acoustic energies could now set in action. . . . The present response is then not solely a function of the present stimulus but of past stimuli as well; it is, and will ever continue to be, a revived response to past stimuli."<sup>28</sup> We deny that these statements correspond with man's actual experiences. First, the image of a past experience recalled by memory is not numerically identical with the original stimulus; and second, the nervous system being organic and composite is changeable, and hence does not and absolutely cannot retain that abiding identity which is essentially necessary to an act of memory. It is a well-established fact of physiology that the constituent elements of a material organism are completely changed in a relatively short length of time. The fact of remembrance can only be explained by the existence in man of a real unitary being which abides the same amid transitory states. It is a necessary condition for the act of recollection that the being who remembers is the same being who experienced the events that memory recalls. Third, memory is not a bodily function alone, and consequently cannot be adequately explained by the properties of matter; fourth, we concede that our intrinsically possible and extrinsically possible knowledge can be our neighbor's too, but deny that our extrinsically active knowledge is included in our neighbor's possible knowledge.

Thought, too, the New Realists hold, is accessible to general observation. In fact, they extend their

<sup>28</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 246.



considerations of memory to it. "When I am thinking abstractions, the contents of my mind, namely the abstractions themselves, are such as you also may think. They are not possessed by me in any exclusive sense. And the fact that they are my contents means that they are somehow bound up with the history of my nervous system. The contents, and the linkage which makes them mine, are alike common objects, lying in the field of general observation and study."<sup>29</sup> That we may both think about the same object is true, but it is false to say that we both have numerically the same thoughts. Since mind, as we have previously proved, cannot be defined in terms of the nervous system, thought is in nowise bound up in the "history of my nervous system."

All who persist in the belief that mental content is inaccessible to anyone but the subject are hampered, says the New Realist, by a "curiously perverse habit of thought." They look for it within the body instead of seeking it in the surrounding environment where alone it can be found. It is here that our search for mental content must begin and end. For "elements become mental content *when reacted to in a specific manner characteristic of the central nervous system.*"<sup>30</sup> Putting it in other words, "consciousness is a mode of interaction within one homogeneous world—an *excerpt of things, which a cerebrally equipped organism selects for its special purposes from its surrounding environ-*

<sup>29</sup> *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 297.

<sup>30</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, p. 299.

ment.”<sup>81</sup> Again we find the materialism of New Realism prominent. Professor Holt believes that “. . . the distinction between the two [mind and matter] is valid, and not to be explained away,”<sup>82</sup> but it must be made “precise.” And Professor Perry points out that “Spirit, if we wish to retain the term, . . . is one of the many kinds of things that may be found by any observer in the same field of observable experience with mountains, rivers, and stars. It is a peculiar combination of elements with a peculiar set of properties.”<sup>83</sup>

Such then is the connotation of mind as presented by Professors Perry and Holt, who, being among the foremost proponents of New Realism, can be accepted as teachers of this New Materialism or Neutral Monism. With the identification of mind with physical objects it is utterly impossible for the New Realists to give a rational explanation of the knowing process. The very words themselves, “to know,” demand two distinct factors in knowing, the object and the subject. New Realism’s acceptance of the empirical spatio-temporal world demands a subsequent belief in a real distinction between the existing world and the immediate content of knowledge. In other words, it must distinguish between the subjective and the objective conditions of knowledge, and admit not only their separate existence but a difference too in their nature. This, however, the New Realists emphatically deny with a vigorous denunciation of the dualistic conception of reality,

<sup>81</sup> Perry: *The Present Conflict of Ideals*, p. 378.

<sup>82</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 113.

<sup>83</sup> Perry: *Op. cit.*, pp. 377, 378.

and treat it as too naïf to be seriously considered. But we shall find on examining their explanation of the knowing process how opposed to common sense it is, and what a barren and absurd concoction is their theory of knowledge.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NEW REALISM: THE KNOWING PROCESS

From our critical consideration of the knowable world and of "mind," it is evident that New Realism is ontologically and epistemologically monistic. It teaches, accordingly, that there are no "subjective" facts opposed to "objective" facts. They are all objective. Although the New Realists deny "... 'purely subjective existence' ... that there is anything that is subjective *through and through*,"<sup>1</sup> they retain the term "subjective" meaning by it "whatever is dependent on consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Consequent upon the identification of "subjective" and "objective," New Realism presents to us a dual aspect, so that it may be interpreted either from the point of view of existence or from that of thought. If from the former, then mind is a cross-section of the physical objects to which the physical organism responds; if from the latter then physical objects are nothing more than logical entities, they are the immediate "content" of knowledge.

The reader will recall perhaps that the world of the New Realists is an empirical spatio-temporal one. This being true, they must distinguish between the existing world and the immediate "con-

<sup>1</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

tent" of knowledge. In other words, they must accept in the traditional sense the distinction between "subjective" and "objective," and recognize it as an essential fact for the explanation of knowledge and of the world. Moreover, the New Realists cannot be empirical-minded and consistently take a logical view of the universe; for by the latter position they give up the existing spatio-temporal world with its physical objects, substituting for it logical entities.

Now, since knowledge implies three things—a knower, a thing known, and the act of knowing—how can New Realism, which fuses the knower and the known until they are indistinguishable, explain knowledge? It tries, but as we shall see, does not succeed. The attempted explanation is at best a caricature, and how could it be otherwise when a fundamental dictate of common sense is discarded, namely, the distinction between the subject knowing and the object known? Professor Holt says, ". . . there are no such two things as knowledge and the object of knowledge, or thought and the thing thought of."<sup>3</sup> And Professor Perry expresses the same thought from a different point of view, ". . . the difference between knowledge and things, like that between mind and body, is a relational and functional difference, and not a difference of content."<sup>4</sup> This denial on the part of the New Realists of an immediate fact of mental experience, the distinction of the knowing self from the reality which is known—a spontaneous conviction of the

<sup>3</sup> Holt: *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> Perry: *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 312.

everyday person—is nothing less than intellectual suicide; and it is for them besides the letting go of one of the basal facts of Naïve Realism to which they stated their theory is a return.<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge being a universal experience of mankind, everybody knows what it is. Hence there is no dispute as to its meaning. It cannot be explained, however, except by a description of itself. To know means to be aware of something, which is called the object of knowledge. This known entity may be either internal or external. That is, knowledge includes not only external things, but also mental states. Thus it is possible to know one's emotions, feelings, thoughts, and to distinguish between feeling and knowing that we feel, acting and knowing that we act, the external object and the emotion that it calls forth. There is then in the cognitive process, an antithesis between the object known and the knowing mind which is modified by the knowing process. The reality of the object known is in no way changed in the knowledge relation; it is the mind alone which is modified by the acquisition of the idea which it did not previously possess. Though the possibility of knowledge is a spontaneous conviction of man, yet just how he comes to know reality is a problem which presents itself for solution as soon as man begins to speculate.

New Realism having rejected the dual nature of man, and the distinction between the subject and that which he knows, presents to us an explanation of the knowledge process which is at variance with most of the experiences of the plain man. It is

<sup>5</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 10.



evident here as elsewhere that the New Realists profess a strong unreasonable dislike for anything traditional. Professor Holt says, "... we have become wedded or indeed welded to the phrase—my thought is of an object, when we ought to say and mean—my thought is a portion of the object—or better still,—a portion of the object is my thought:—exactly as a portion of the sky is the zenith." <sup>6</sup> Is not this statement diametrically opposed to common sense? When an object, say a pansy, is known by the everyday person, does he spontaneously consider that his thought is the pansy itself? We think not. But rather that the pansy, because it has been brought into relation with his senses, has impressed itself upon them. As to precisely how this is done, he is not in the least interested. He gives us, however, a fact which no philosopher can ignore in his speculations, and one which the New Realists have seemingly forgotten. Or have they in their over-anxiety to emphasize the immediate experience of everything surrounding man, a truth which we also maintain, failed to note the other fact of common sense? Or do they ignore this datum of human consciousness, the distinction between subject and object, because they conceive it to militate against the immediate presence of the object of cognition in consciousness?

It is necessary at this point of our critical study to recall New Realism's meaning of consciousness, and to form a more adequate concept of it. We have seen in a previous chapter that consciousness is an environmental cross-section of the objects to

<sup>6</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 149.

which a given organism responds. In the words of Professor Holt, "A consciousness is the group of (neutral) entities to which a nervous system, both at one moment and in the course of its life history, responds with a specific response."<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere he writes, ". . . the phenomenon of *response* defines a cross-section of the environment without, which is a neutral manifold. Now this neutral cross-section outside of the nervous system, and composed of the neutral elements of physical and non-physical objects to which the nervous system is responding by some specific response,—this neutral cross-section, I submit, coincides exactly with the list of objects of which we say that we are conscious. This neutral cross-section as defined by the specific reaction of reflex-arcs is the psychic realm: it is the manifold of our sensations, perceptions and ideas:—it is consciousness."<sup>8</sup> Is consciousness then distinct from the knower? Professor Holt answers: "Consciousness, whenever localized at all (as it by no means always is) in space, is *not* in the skull, but is 'out there' precisely wherever it appears to be. This is, for me at least, one of the cardinal principles of realism. . . . The idea that consciousness is within the skull, current as it is, has arisen from the obvious connection between modifications of the nervous system and changes in consciousness. But this connection can be in other ways than that of a spatial inclusion of consciousness by the nervous system. Suppose, for instance, that the latter is like a searchlight which, by playing over a land-

<sup>7</sup> *New Realism*, p. 373.

<sup>8</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 182.

scape and illuminating now this object and now that, thus defines a new collection of objects all of which are integral parts of the landscape (and remain so), although they have now gained membership in another manifold—the class of all objects on which the illumination falls. Here, too, there would be a direct connection between the members of the illuminated class and the movements of the light: as there is between the contents of consciousness and changes of the nervous system. Any class that is formed from the members of a given manifold by some selective principle which is independent of the principles which have organized the manifold may be called a *cross-section*. And such a thing is consciousness of mind,—a cross-section of the universe, selected by the nervous system. The elements or parts of the universe selected, and thus included in the class mind are all elements or parts to which the nervous system makes a *specific response*. It responds thus specifically to a spatial object if it brings the body to touch that object, to point toward it, to copy it, and so forth. . . . Consciousness is, then, out there wherever the things specifically responded to are.”<sup>o</sup> Professor Perry explains consciousness from two angles: “Consciousness is a two-sided affair. On the one hand there is what is commonly called the content or the object, such as percepts, ideas, or memories. The theory of the immanence of consciousness means that these contents or objects are parts of the environment, borrowed by the mind, but not exclusively appropriated or owned by it. . . . The other side

<sup>o</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 353, 354.

of consciousness is what is commonly called 'subject' or activity of mind. It consists of the acts of perceiving, thinking, remembering, etc. The realistic theory of immanence would regard this too as homogeneous with its surroundings." <sup>10</sup>

Now consciousness "is homogeneous with the remainder of the world, in the sense that it is composed ultimately of the same elements. But the particular combination of elements which distinguishes consciousness differs from other forms of combination, such as bodies or mathematical systems." <sup>11</sup> From these passages it is clear that the New Realists read out of the universe consciousness in the traditional sense. In fact they attempt to explain the knowing process without it; for to them it is just one form of the response process, and is deducible from the life-process of response. Or consciousness may be looked upon as "the means of bringing things within the range of purposive action. It determines the limits of the environment 'taken account of,' as distinguished from the total environment." <sup>12</sup> Since consciousness is not a factor to be reckoned with in the knowledge relation the New Realist says that "If he is interested at all in consciousness, he seeks out its relation to the nervous system and to the many physical influences acting on it and to the behavior which it sets up or qualifies. For him, therefore, a description of whatever peculiarities may appear *within* the cognitive field is useful by way of supplying symptoms that may assist him in a diagnosis of that strange fever

<sup>10</sup> *The Present Conflict of Ideals*, p. 377.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>12</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 141.

called knowing.”<sup>13</sup> Again, we find an expression of the uselessness of consciousness in explaining the knowing process, or in other words, New Realism’s presentation of a theory of knowledge without the knowing factor.

Since the “contents” of mind remain at the same time constituents of the object-world, when we wish to know what another person has in mind all we need to do is to take an inventory of the objects in the environment and his behavior to them. What an easy matter! But alas, as we noted elsewhere in our study, such is not a fact of experience. The knowing process is not so simple a mental activity, and furthermore it demands a knower that is not the body alone, a central nervous system including the sense-organs, but a body informed by a simple, spiritual, substantial principle. Hence knowledge cannot be a bodily activity alone; it is something more than a specific response. It is the production of a coöperative activity of a knower—an organized whole, body and soul—and the thing known. This intervention on the part of the knower is a fact which no knowledge theory can ignore, if it is to give a true explanation of the knowing process.

It is a dictate of experience that we have the power of knowing, and that the object of our knowledge is the universe which is brought within us by means of sensation and thought. In order to know, however, there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled on the part of the knower. And these are satisfied by the cognitive processes, sense perception and intellection. Now, New Real-

<sup>13</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, pp. 434, 436.



ism recognizes the functions of sensation and perception as the "first property" of the "psychic-cross-section"—called also environmental cross-section during the period of specific response on the part of some living organism. Professor Holt says, "sensations and perceptions [are] one with their 'objects.' In fact, there are not sensations or perceptions *and* their objects. There are objects, and when these are included in the manifold called consciousness they are called sensations and perceptions. . . . Sensations and perceptions are objects in the hierarchy of *being*, and they are in the psychic cross-section when the nervous system specifically responds to them. . . . And if the object is more than the sensation or perception, it is because the nervous system is responding to some components only of the object: but such components are at one and the same time, and without any sort of reduplication, a part of the object and a part of the consciousness. Object and consciousness intersect each other, and their cross-section is the sensation or perception."<sup>14</sup> Professor Montague expresses the same line of thought in the following passage: ". . . I regard," he says, "the image before the mind in veridical perception and the existent object as numerically identical, but differing in their *causal* contexts and in their *histories*. By this I mean that the relation between the existent object and the truly perceived object is like the relation of Mr. Coolidge and the President of the United States. They are now numerically one in the sense that they occupy the same position in the spatio-temporal series. Mr.

<sup>14</sup> Holt: *The Concept of Consciousness*, pp. 219, 222.



Coolidge "is" the President, but the history of Mr. Coolidge is not the history of the presidency."<sup>15</sup>

Nothing is clearer than New Realism's endeavor to maintain the objectivity and independence of the concrete world—to save as it were that universe, the field of knowledge and action—no matter what else may be lost in the process. Again the facts of experience, the ordinary man's beliefs, which New Realism implicitly pledged itself to respect are repudiated. Just so everything is "out there"—the only exception being the physiological structure of the man perceiving which to another like being is also "out there"—the New Realists are content in their findings. We cannot conceive anything more ridiculous than sensations and perceptions being in the world objective to us like tomatoes, chickens, flowers, minerals, houses, etc. Even so elemental cognitive processes as sensation and perception, call for two terms, the subject knowing and the knowable object. In other words, when I hear the song of the Baltimore oriole, for instance, a singing bird acts upon my mind by means of the body. By affecting the peripheral organs the feathered songster produces in them definite neural reactions which determine the kind of sense impression of which the mind becomes aware. It is through these impressions that the mind is conformed to the object, but the two do not become physically one. When the mind is impressed by the object a likeness of it is produced by means of which the mind perceives. It is the singing oriole and not the image-likeness that is perceived. Hence for us, too, the

<sup>15</sup> *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XXI, p. 316.

objects of perception are in the external world when we perceive them, and they remain there unmodified after they have been perceived by us. Under no consideration do we believe that their existence depends upon their being perceived, nor that our perceptions of them are the objects. Underlying all perceptions are our spontaneous judgments of the externality of the objects which we perceive, and the principle of causality which assures us that the concrete individual things, together with their qualities of which sensations make us aware, must actually exist; otherwise we would have an effect without an adequate cause. Perceptual knowledge puts us in direct contact with reality, and this contact involves a relation between the thing and mind. That there can be no identification of the object and the perception is a dictate of common sense as well as a scientific fact.

Professor Montague explains the epistemological triangle thus: "Physical objects send forth waves of energy in various directions and of various kinds, but all in some measure characteristic of the objects from which they proceed. These energies impinge upon the organism, and the sensory end-organs and the nerve fibers then transmit to the brain the kinds of energy to which they are severally adjusted or attuned. The final effect is the resultant of these sensory energies modified by the reaction of the brain. This complex cerebral state is something quite physical and objective—as much so as the extra-organic object which is its partial cause. It is a natural event with its own qualities and its own position in the space and time order. . . . The

brain event is the 'knower' and what it implies is the 'known.' ”<sup>16</sup> The physical and the physiological factors involved in sensation are duly recognized by the New Realists, but the psychical element without which no sensation can be produced is ignored. A sensation is a vital immanent action. When an object by means of its impressed image determines the living organic faculty it enables the vital faculty to produce the expressed image, or vital representation. Without this cognitional determinant there is no formal sensation; for the mere passive reception of the determination is just one stage of the sensitive cognitive process. We can summarize the Scholastic teaching in regard to sensation in the words of Doctor Maher: “The excitation of a sensation usually comprises three stages. First, there is an action of the physical world external to the organism. This action, transmitted in some form of motion to the sense-organ, gives rise there to the second stage. This consists of a molecular disturbance in the substance of the nerves which is propagated to the brain. Thereupon, a completely new phenomenon, the conscious sensation, is awakened.”<sup>17</sup> In adult life, however, we have perceptions and not simply sensations of external objects. Whereas the former is the consciousness of things, the latter is the consciousness of the qualities of things. The baby hears a sound, sees a color, smells an odor, touches something hard, tastes something sweet; we hear the song of a bird or the church organ, we see a colored dress, we smell a violet, we

<sup>16</sup> *New Realism*, pp. 286, 287.

<sup>17</sup> Maher: *Psychology*, p. 43.

touch a desk, we taste an orange. Perception is, therefore, a synthesis of several simultaneous sensations. It is in perception that sensations acquire a meaning. Besides the impressions made on the various organs of sense, there is always implied in perception some sort of consciousness and memory. A moderate amount of reflection on the various qualities which we apprehend in the "external sense data" of awareness reveals those which are the proper objects of one sense and those which are the object of several senses. The former we call secondary qualities such as: colors, sounds, tastes, odors, pressures, temperatures, organic states; the latter we call primary qualities, such as: shape, size, rest, and motion.

Although Professor Holt makes a distinction between sensation and perception, he might just as well have ignored it, as he draws no clear cut line between them. He writes, "But I believe that the term sensation is usually applied to them [the so-called 'secondary qualities'] so long as the mass of qualities that enter together has within itself little or no logical structure or unity, no internal relationship: while in perception the groups have some logical coherence. The line is not sharply drawn and need not be. Thus a blur of colours, a vague noise, or an undefinable change in one's mood, if too little organized or coherent to *mean* anything, is a case of sensation or of the sensing of a group of sensations. . . . While if qualities come in more coherent groups they constitute perceptions."<sup>18</sup> We interpret this passage to mean that in the last analysis

<sup>18</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 210.

sensation and perception are essentially the same, the presence or absence of coherence in the group-qualities being the determining factor as to which of the two divisions the physical object belongs. We agree with the New Realists that the data of sensations and perceptions are the same, but do not admit that their difference consists in the attribute named. To any sense-object which we perceive there are as many external sensations as there are qualities in it. Each external sense reports or presents to our mind some sensible quality or other of external entities. Now those sensible impressions are made at the same time, and the sensations produced by them are associated with one another by the central sense or the faculty of mental association. So the qualities perceived by the production of those sensations enter our consciousness as forming one whole. The difference, therefore, between sensation and perception is that the latter is the mental activity of writing in one common image all the various impressions made on the organs of sense. Both put us in contact with the objective world. It is of the very essence of both to acquaint us with reality. Viewed subjectively, they are mental functions, but viewed objectively they are experiences of the external material universe traced in us according to our nature. We cannot fail to note each aspect of them. Unless we are willing to consider these processes as modifications of us by means of which we are determined to know the universe and our own bodies, then we cut ourselves off from ever being able to give a rational account of anything.



Now New Realism identifies consciousness with a cross-section of the surrounding environment to which the nervous organism responds. What do the New Realists mean by cross-section? Professor Holt explains the term by saying it is "any part collection that is defined by a law which is unrelated (or but remotely related) to the laws that define the whole in question: in other words, let us call any definable part that is in no wise *organically* related to the whole, a cross-section."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, his description of the navigator will make clearer New Realism's conception of consciousness as a cross-section: "... a navigator exploring his course at night with the help of a searchlight, illuminates a considerable expanse of wave and cloud, occasionally the bow and forward mast of his ship, and the hither side of other ships and of buoys, lighthouses, and other objects that lie above the horizon. Now the sum total of all *surfaces* thus illuminated in the course, say, of an entire night is a cross-section of the region in question that has rather interesting characteristics. It is defined, of course, by the contours and surface composition of the region, including such changes as take place in these (specially on the surface of the waves), and by the searchlight and its movements, and by the progress of the ship. The manifold, so defined, however, is neither ship nor searchlight, nor any part of them, but it is a portion (oddly selected) of the region through which the ship is passing. This cross-section, as a manifold, is clearly extended in space and extended in time as well, since it ex-

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 170.



tends through some watches of the night. It includes also colour qualities. This cross-section, furthermore, is in no sense inside the searchlight, nor are the objects that make up the cross-section in any wise dependent on the searchlight for their substance or their *being*.

"Now cross-sections that in many respects resemble the one just described are found in any manifold in which there is organic life. . . . It is to certain features, and not to others, of its environment that the living organism responds, and the group of things to which it thus reacts constitutes a cross-section manifold that is of prime importance to one who is studying the organism and one that is of the most vital importance, of course, to the organism itself."<sup>20</sup> The identification of the contents of consciousness with the physical objects is patent. In this passage, Professor Holt gives a very plain explanation of New Realism's knowing process. As we understand the analogy, the navigator of the ship is the "person knowing," the searchlight, his nervous organism, and all the objects within the ship's course, that the searchlight illuminates, the cross-section of the universe to which the nervous system responds, or in other words the content of consciousness, or just consciousness. He especially emphasizes the point that the type of cross-section depends both on the nature of the physical objects and on the searchlight and its movements. Hence, the collection of entities that compose the psychic cross-section, as well as their arrangement, is wholly dependent on the specific response of the organism

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 171, 172.

at any moment to the concrete physical world without. The individual members of the cross-section, the New Realists call "sensations," "perceptions," "ideas," for they are units of the psychic manifold as atoms are units of the physical manifold. "But their substance remains always neutral; for it takes the *entire* cross-section to constitute a mind, and its individual components are no more made of mental substance than they are of cross-section substance, or no more than physical objects, as we have previously seen, are made of physical substance or 'Matter.'"<sup>21</sup> It is perfectly clear that our interpretation of the New Realists' exteriorization of consciousness is correct for we read: ". . . the consciousness that depends on any given living organism is the sum total of all neutral entities to which that living organism responds, and it is the system of these entities in just such and such quantity and just such spatial and temporal arrangement as the environment and the responses themselves define."<sup>22</sup>

Since New Realism denies existence to a spiritual factor in man, what portion of man does the all important work of "specific response"? Perhaps Professor Montague's own words will give an explanation that will clearly indicate the cause. "The nervous system . . . in *perceiving, remembering, imagining, and reacting . . . is respectively ingesting, digesting, reproducing, and excreting those free energies dissociated from matter which in the form of vibrations of various kinds have proceeded from distant objects through the sensory channels to the brain, where they constitute by their implications a*

<sup>21</sup> Holt: *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 184.

consciousness of those objects and make possible an intelligent and purposive adjustment to an environment extending in time and space immeasurably beyond the field of mere chemical and mechanical contacts.”<sup>23</sup> “But the functional units of the nervous system . . . are reflex-arcs of longer or shorter extent. In every case they begin with a receptor, pass through some part of the central nervous system, and terminate in an effector. And physiologists do not find that in passing through the cerebral cortex, nervous currents are diminished by a leakage into the unseen psychical world, or augmented by any ‘volitional’ influxes therefrom. They move through the mazes of the hemispheres no more mysteriously than through the lowest spinal level. Yet what a hocus-pocus has been intercalated here by the psychological theories of parallelism and interactionism!”<sup>24</sup> The essentials of the reflex-arc are as noted, a receptor or sense-organ that receives the stimulus: a conductor, or differentiated fibre that conducts the excitation: an effector, a contractile tissue that transforms this nervous excitation into movement.<sup>25</sup> “To the retarding influence of psychological theory, physiology owes the fact that until now the capital importance of reflex-arcs has not been recognized, nor these arcs fairly studied. So far as reflex-arcs that involve the cerebral cortex go, the Cartesian psychology has in large measure successfully imposed its caveat on the physiologist, who modestly betook himself to posterior regions. There might be, one feared, a Soul in the pineal

<sup>23</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 285.

<sup>24</sup> Holt: *The Concept of Consciousness*, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

gland or elsewhere, that was directing affairs from that end; and if disturbed it might fly away to lodge a complaint in high places. Little by little this preposterous tabu has lost in sanctity, although it still exerts some unhappy influence. The alienist is even to-day in doubt with his hysterical patient whether to administer bromide of soda and other medicaments or a good hearty wallop; 'physick' being good for the body, but discipline for the soul. Yet for the most part the physiologist has come to feel that he may now examine the cerebral cortex, and even the pineal gland, without apprehending an uncanny surprise."<sup>26</sup> Yes, and if he and the New Realists understood the Scholastic doctrine of the dual nature of man, the substantial union of body and soul, the physiologist could have centuries ago examined both the cerebral cortex and the pineal gland without any fear of a bogey jumping out, and the New Realists to-day would not be expressing such nonsensical, suicidal ideas. For unless the immaterial principle in man is admitted, the knowledge problem becomes insoluble and morality becomes a nonentity. The nervous organism of which the reflex-arc is the functional unit is a counterfeit substitute for the mind. Being material in its nature it cannot perform any selective responses, but must needs be animated and directed by an immaterial entity. When we look out of a train window at a moving crowd our senses being passive must of necessity be impressed by their formal objects; but if we select the expressions on the faces of the passersby, and ignore everything else, it is not the

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 176, 177.

reflex-arc, but "something" above it that does the choosing. Furthermore, the New Realists seem to forget entirely the empirical fact that we can be oblivious of the passersby and attend to thoughts that are absolutely subjective.

And this brings us to the pure fact of thinking, that is, understanding, which is knowledge in the true sense of the word. Perceptions make us aware of this desk, this chair, this organ, this rose,—of concrete individual things, together with their qualities. These concrete presentations of sense furnish the material from which the intellect fashions by abstraction universal concepts which belong to no particular place and time. By abstraction the intellect concentrates on the constitutive elements of an individual thing to the exclusion of the accidental ones. For instance, a man may be short or tall, black or white, handsome or ugly, young or old, good or bad, but he is none the less a man. There are other qualities, however, which he cannot be deprived of without ceasing to be a man. It is not a matter of indifference as to whether he is rational or irrational, living or dead, possessed of that form called human, or of some other entirely different one. He must be rational, living, possessed of human form, otherwise he ceases to be a man, for these qualities constitute his essence. There is, therefore, in man the power of forming concepts which in nature must be like to the faculty which forms them. Consequently the image of the external object, man, received into the intellect must be something supra-sensible and spiritual. Subjectively considered, this concept is a modification of the mind; objectively,



it puts us in relation with a thing existing outside of the mind. Now, pure thought to the New Realists, "if it does not 'correspond' to an outer fact (sensation, perception, and memory), nor yet contains volitional elements, is nothing but the passage through the conscious cross-section of our familiar neutral entities in more or less connected groups. The same is true of reflective thought and of judgment."<sup>27</sup> Surely the New Realists are putting aside the conclusions deduced from the differences perceived in the objects which sense and intellect present to consciousness. But since they contend that consciousness is "out there wherever the things specifically responded to are,"<sup>28</sup> this statement is the natural outcome. Nevertheless, it absolutely cannot explain the supra-sensuous products of the mind, which are, because of their nature, entities of the mind alone, with a foundation in the world of sense; for the New Realists conceive nothing subjective.

Does New Realism explain pure thought? The reader, we think, will answer with us, No. Can anything so accidental as "more or less connected groups" explain our universal, abstract, immaterial concepts? Surely only the existence of a being like them in nature can be their adequate efficient cause. Even common sense, when it understands this metaphysical principle, will assent to the reasonableness of our position. New Realism has no place for ideals, inventiveness, the dream-world of aspirations, since its one and only heart's desire is to put everything in the spatial externality. This, indeed, calls

<sup>27</sup> Holt: *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>28</sup> Holt and others: *New Realism*, p. 354.



for the giving up of a mental experience, which it is impossible to relinquish.

To summarize: the knowing process of the New Realists is the specific response of the body to its environment. We agree that the organism reacts to physical objects. But we maintain that the sensations, the means of becoming aware of objects, are produced by them in the compound body and soul and that a group of sensations does not constitute knowledge. The physical organism of itself is insufficient to explain so complicated a process. There is needed as we have already said the soul, which is at once the principle of life and the principle of thought. Since the New Realists reject it in much the same manner as a mature-minded person does a fairy tale, they present to the philosophic world a pseudo-explanation of the knowing process, and reveal themselves to be intellectual rovers in the field of innovation.

## CHAPTER IX

### NEW REALISM: TRUTH AND ERROR

It must now be fairly obvious to the reader that New Realism teaches an exaggerated Objectivism. Starting as a polemic against Idealism or Subjectivism, it soon passed to the opposite extreme; that is, from the view that "everything is subjective" to the view that "everything is objective." In consequence, as we have seen, the New Realists present for acceptance a theory of knowledge which denies a plain immediate experienced fact, one impossible for anyone to doubt, namely, the difference between the knowing of an object and the object which is known. There is surely no more intimate fact of experience than that of knowing, that is, the awareness either of our own mental states, or of the physical world. As we shall attempt to show, this ignoring of the subjective factor in knowledge makes it as impossible for New Realism to explain error, as it did to account for the explanation, in any intelligible sense at least, of the knowing process.

Since knowledge, both perceptual and intellectual, puts us in direct contact with reality, a relation is involved, a certain correspondence between the thing and mind. Because of this fact, it is quite natural

when we reflect upon it to ask ourselves, Do our sensations and ideas truly represent things outside the mind? And furthermore, if they do conform with them, how is error possible? Can we ever be sure that our knowledge is true? If so, what is the criterion? Is it subjective or objective? The theory of knowledge, therefore, must go hand in hand with the theory of truth and error. We are not satisfied with the patent fact of knowing objects. We desire further that there be a real correspondence or equation between the contents of mind and the real entities that determine them; for experience proves sometimes that our judgments are untrue, that we are in error—a fact that can be no more disregarded than truth itself, as both are involved in the knowledge theory. Although the New Realists assert the “subsistence” of error, they hold that “the problem of error, as that of ‘reality,’ is in no way involved in the problem of knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Holt believes that “the task for realism or for any philosophy is . . . to acknowledge the empirical subsistence of errors and contradictions and to show the significance and place of these things in the tissue of the universe.”<sup>2</sup> Again the extreme of objectivity obtrudes itself. In amazement, we ask the New Realists for the basic fact of experience that substantiates the placement of errors alongside physical objects in the universe. But we ask in vain, for their only ground for the objectivity of error consists in a purely arbitrary and fanciful distinction of objects into “real subsistents” or “existents,” and

<sup>1</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

"unreal subsistents" or "subsistents." "Now for realism by no means everything is real. . . . For the gist of realism is not to insist that everything is real, far from it, but to insist that everything that is is and is as it is. . . . The universe is not all real; but the universe all is." <sup>3</sup> Whatever any mind can be aware of, or think of, or talk of, must have, according to the New Realists, subsistence, being. Hence palaces of gold and diamonds, fairies, goblins, magic carpets, singing brooks, talking trees, dreams, hallucinations—in a word, all make-believe objects have *being* in the universe as truly as the objects of natural science and common sense. The only difference in the two classes is that the former are unreal and the latter, real. The New Realists place truth with the real beings, and error with the unreal beings; both are properties of things and not of subjective facts. Since both the real and the unreal beings exist, it is not surprising that Professor Holt should write: "As to what reality is, I take no great interest. . . . Certain it is that unreality is no more subjective than reality; for a thing may be objective and yet unreal, as is commonly asserted of certain numbers and of some systems of geometry." <sup>4</sup>

So much by way of preliminary explanation of the position of error in the world of New Realism. Let us now turn to an analysis of truth. In Scholastic philosophy every object in the extra-mental world is true; that is, since every being has specific properties, its nature is capable of being discerned. The truth of things is called ontological truth, and

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 359, 360.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 366, 367.

may be defined as "a relation of identity of nature between a thing presented to the mind and an ideal type previously known there." <sup>5</sup> This ideal type has been derived from experience, and is taken by the mind as a standard to judge the truth of like objects in the physical order. A fuller conception of ontological truth is given by Doctor Coffey when he says: "Realizing, then, that God has created all things according to Infinite Wisdom, we can see that the essences of things are imitations of exemplar ideas in the Divine Mind. On the Divine Mind they depend essentially for their reality and intelligibility. It is because all created realities, including the human mind itself, are adumbrations of the Divine Essence, that they are intelligible to the human mind. Thus we see that in the ontological order, in the order of real gradation and dependence among things, as distinct from the order of human experience, the reason why reality has ontological truth for the human mind is because it is antecedently and essentially in accord with the Divine Mind from which it derives its intelligibility. Although, therefore, ontological truth is for us proximately and immediately the conformity of reality with our own conceptions, it is primarily and fundamentally the essential conformity of all reality with the Divine Mind." <sup>6</sup> Ontological truth is the basis for logical truth or the truth of thought. In order that knowledge of the universe be true there must be a correspondence between the mind of the knower and the object which he knows. The notion of correspond-

<sup>5</sup> Mercier: *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 460.

<sup>6</sup> Coffey: *Ontology or Theory of Being*, p. 161.

ence, therefore, is a very important one for the Scholastic theory of truth. It has been and still is the target for modern philosophic theories.

As no exact analogy to the relation of correspondence exists in nature, it is impossible to find any physical process that will enable our critics to understand correctly what we mean by the conformity of the mind and its object in the knowledge relation. Mind, being immaterial and the object being material, the conformity between them must necessarily differ from any other kind. In no wise can it be expounded in terms of mirroring or photographic copying which gives only the externals of a person, scene, or house; for mind does not merely represent reality, it interprets the presentations of the perceptual and conceptual processes through judgments. And mental correspondence does not exist unless it gives us real insight into reality. This correspondence is, however, not an exact reproduction of external things; there is not an identification between the resemblance and the object. For were this so, then mental content and the object would be numerically one. Owing to the finiteness of the mind, this mental content is inadequate in comparison with the reality, but it is nevertheless true. Now, things are known only when they become translated into thoughts, and thoughts are true when their contents have been determined by objects to which they are referred. It is essential for logical truth that the knowing mind conform or correspond with the thing known. That the New Realists do not understand our species of the relation of correspondence is clear from this passage: "Now there is a machine for



manufacturing the lasts on which shoes are made. A model last is placed in contact with one end of an arm and the machine at once carves out of a block of wood a second last which is like the model. The machine at work has quite the air of seeing its model. Indeed, the comparison between duplicate and model has an uncanny resemblance to the subject-object relation.”<sup>7</sup> Another statement showing how the New Realists misinterpret the traditional explanation of knowledge, is from the pen of Professor Montague. He says: “Consciousness is now regarded as analogous to a photographic plate on which objects external to the knower are represented or symbolized by the ‘ideas’ which they produce. This *epistemological dualism*, however, becomes unsatisfactory as soon as it is realized that we can ascribe to the external objects inferred as the causes of our percepts no locus or nature other than that of the percepts themselves.”<sup>8</sup> It is unnecessary to comment on these statements further than to repeat what we have said already that the New Realists fail utterly to grasp the Scholastic explanation of knowledge and of truth.

Now precisely what do they mean by truth? As everything with them is objective, we shall, of course, look for it in the extra-mental world, and there we shall find it. For Professor Montague writes: “I shall use the term ‘truth’ to connote ‘true knowledge’ and the term ‘error’ to connote ‘false knowledge’; hence the definition of truth and error will resolve itself into the definition of true and

<sup>7</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 304.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

false. I hold that *the true and the false are respectively the real and the unreal, considered as objects of a possible belief or judgment.*"<sup>10</sup> Professor Holt maintains that the essence of truth does not lie in correspondence, but "in mutual consistency between propositions."<sup>10</sup> And a proposition, according to Professor Montague, is "a complex, in which may always be distinguished two terms related by some tense and number of the verb *to be*. . . . We can say that the *real universe consists of the space-time system of existents, together with all that is presupposed by that system*. And as every reality can be regarded as a true identity-complex or proposition, and as each proposition has one and only one contradictory, we may say that the remainder of the realm of subsistent objects must consist of the false propositions or unrealities, particular and universal, which contradict the true propositions comprising reality."<sup>11</sup> It is clear, we think, that the physical objects are the terms; and the relations which obtain between them constitute the propositions. Now, the terms themselves are the immutable facts of experience, but the relations existing between them are mutable; hence the diverse propositions formed, and the consequent existence of errors. Whereas Professor Holt is most explicit too in stating that both truth and error are objective, that they are properties of things and not of thought considered as a subjective entity, he emphasizes non-contradiction as the criterion of truth. "Now it may be admitted," he says, "that 'errors' are all of knowl-

<sup>10</sup> *Concept of Consciousness*, p. 279.    <sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, pp. 254, 255.

edge, or are in experience; but the important point is another: that all errors are cases of contradiction or contrariety. One has met error who has experienced that A is B and that the same A is not B. But the experiencing is not the significant fact, and that all errors are of knowledge is true merely by definition, since contrariety or contradiction is called 'error' only when it occurs in some person's field of consciousness. The actual problem is the contradiction or contrariety itself: what is the significance of a universe that holds such things? And here, once more, the only solution which appeals in practice to any one is the ancient one: that only one of two incompatible propositions *is* in the universe, the other is 'only subjective.' " <sup>12</sup> To lend strength to his view that errors are in the external world and not in a subjective "shut in" camping ground, this exponent of New Realism enumerates instances of observable contradictions in the world about us, such as "collision, interference, acceleration and retardation, growth and decay, equilibrium, *et caetera, et caetera.*" <sup>13</sup> For Professor Holt, non-contradiction is the criterion of truth, whereas for Professor Montague, reality is the criterion. Contradiction and unreality are, therefore, synonymous with error. It is simply a difference of point of view and not of contrary explanations.

We must be careful not to accuse the New Realists of making terms contradictory for we read, "propositions are often enough contradictory, terms never are. . . . Every case of error or untruth is a case of contradictory propositions: and a single prop-

<sup>12</sup> *New Realism*, p. 361.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

osition is neither true nor false.”<sup>14</sup> The New Realists distinguish between the content which is a part of the object or term and the propositional content. Now the former can be in itself neither true nor false, it simply is; but the latter, since it is thought or opinion that is, an assertion about objectivity may or may not be true. “Truth and falsity . . . attach to propositions or objects,”<sup>15</sup> and are in no way the attributes of judgment as a mental act. Perhaps it would clarify matters at this point to get the New Realists’ meaning of belief and judgment. With them, belief “is the attitude we take toward any proposition that *appears* to be true or real, and . . . it carries with it a tendency to act on that proposition,”<sup>16</sup> and judgments “are the expressions or utterances of beliefs.”<sup>17</sup> Like belief, a judgment “is originally a name for an act or process on the part of the individual; both words have come also to be used to denote *what* is believed and *what* is judged, *i.e.*, the proposition or identity-complex asserted.”<sup>18</sup> Truth and error, however, belong to judgment in the latter sense only. “If the thing believed is a fact, the judgment expressing it is true; if not a fact, then the judgment is called false.”<sup>19</sup>

It is absolutely impossible for us to conceive the objectivity of either truth or error. The residence of both as proved by individual experience is subjective, and no amount of violent criticism can eradicate this notion of their subjectivity. In vain do we seek for an explanation of truth and error in an

<sup>14</sup> Holt: *Concept of Consciousness*, p. 264.

<sup>15</sup> Holt and Others: *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

objective habitat; for by this very assumption these notions become meaningless. As we have noted in the beginning of this chapter, each object in the physical universe has its "own real nature and character, its proper mental correlate, and, therefore, its ontological truth."<sup>20</sup> Hence, no object is false; for whatever is real is ontologically true. The false, therefore, must be unreal, which is the same as nothingness. It is true, of course, that we often speak of false gold, a false note, false virtue, false gods, a false friend. Things, however, are denominated false only metaphorically, either because they have proved the occasion of a false judgment, or because the mind has falsely attributed a certain predicate to a subject. Falsity is not in the objects, but only in the judgments. We transfer the falsity to the objects because their appearances often mislead us to judge them to be realities which they merely resemble. In this way they accidentally deceive us, but the real fundamental cause of our erroneous judgments is the fallibility and limitations of our own mind.

We do not, however, deny the existence of error; and since it is a fact, it must have a cause. Since knowledge of the external world is possible, we must have cognitive faculties whose deliverances are to be trusted; for their purpose or end, is truth. There is scarcely any need to establish a criterion for truth, since perception, conception and judgment when functioning normally give us knowledge and true knowledge. What is necessary is to formulate a criterion for error or a negative criterion for truth.

<sup>20</sup> Coffey: *Ontology or Theory of Being*, p. 164.



Truth, we have said, is the conformity between our judgment and the thing. We accept the truth of a proposition when we clearly perceive that the relation is one of identity, in other words, when we perceive an identity which is truly objective. All thought-objects being aspects of reality are real, and whenever they are actually thought of, are immediately present to the intellect. But mere sense or intellectual awareness is not logical truth, for truth of thought is found only in judgments, or interpretations of reality, that is, in the relations between objects of thought. Judgment is not, however, a passive mental assimilation of reality, otherwise even the possibility of error would be unthinkable; but it is an active process, a deciphering, as it were, of the presented reality. The mind being finite grasps the concrete, complex reality piecemeal in abstract forms, and these factors it compares and then synthesizes, pronouncing judgments asserting or denying the actual existence of certain conceived objects, or the possibility, or impossibility of certain essences. The vast magnificent handiwork of God and the works—imitative and industrial—of man, are problems which present themselves each day for intelligible interpretation, through the processes of judgment and reasoning. And, as we have shown, the interpretations are true, if the judgments represent reality as it is; they are false, if they represent reality otherwise than as it is. For then, instead of putting the mind in conformity with reality, they do the contrary and introduce disconformity between the two. For Scholastics, then, a judgment is not identified with the objective relation



between objects. It is a pronouncement of the relation discovered by the intellect between thought-objects. Father Coffey defines the judgment as "a mental act which represents a reality by objectively and really identifying formally distinct aspects of that reality (*affirmative*), or by objectively and really separating some thought-object (or aspect of reality) from that reality (*negative*)."<sup>21</sup> And he says the truth of a judgment is "the conformity of the identifying (*affirmative*) or discriminating (*negative*) representation with an objective and real identity or diversity, respectively."<sup>22</sup> Our meanings of judgment and the truth of judgment are in strict opposition to those of New Realism. To repeat, the New Realists consider judgment "the identity-complex" which is nothing else than the relation of "elemental particulars" of the existing world; and the existing world consists, among other things, of physical objects or physical manifolds. The judgment, therefore, is identical with the relation between physical entities; or, in other words, the judgment and the physical objects in external relation are one. Truth, too, with the New Realists, is an attribute of extra-mental objects. As the objective is supreme with them, in that nothing is subjective in the traditional sense, they are consistent of course in putting in the "outer" world everything that we look upon as strictly mental; but in so doing, they render knowledge, truth, and error inexplicable.

For us the ultimate criterion of truth is intrinsic objective evidence. Since a criterion or test of truth

<sup>21</sup> *Epistemology*, Vol. II, p. 251.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*.

is something that directs the function of the interpretative faculty, so that it will assert and assent to only true judgments, it must be distinct from the judging faculty. Unless we accept this criterion as our guide, it is impossible to obtain truth. In the words of Doctor Coffey, "the real truth-value of all our knowledge, *i.e.*, its value as giving us a genuine insight into reality, depends altogether on whether the intellect, when its assent to such principles is compelled, . . . thereby gets an insight into reality. And this in turn depends on whether the compelling factor is *objective evidencce*, *i.e.*, the *reality itself* presented as necessarily representable by intellect through such axiomatic judgments, as having and displaying a *real exigency* for such representation; or whether on the contrary the compelling factor is a subjective influence which, whether conscious or unconscious, has no claim to any *evidential* value, *i.e.*, to any significance as *manifesting reality* to the mind." <sup>23</sup> This evidence for the judgment is really identical with the reality which the judgment interprets. Consistency between judgments, which Professor Holt offers as a criterion of truth, will not stand scrutiny. On the surface it seems plausible, and a very simple criterion. It does not, however, on close investigation stand the acid test for a criterion. We have observed that the truth of a judgment consists in its conformity with reality, and not in its conformity with another judgment. In our experiences we find that much of our knowledge is first awareness of reality, and not a new consciousness of the same reality. Hence it must be

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 279.

evident that before we can pronounce that judgments are compatible, we must have previously perceived the truth of our initial interpretation of reality. Furthermore, a number of judgments may be consistent with one another, and yet the whole system be very far from conforming with objective reality. Any consistent short story or novel is not by reason of its consistency true to any definite class of people and events. By identifying truth with reality, the New Realists deny themselves a criterion whereby to test the truth of judgments. In fact, we find their theory of knowledge and their theory of truth and error a fanciful structure with a foundation of quicksand; for like all monistic theories, it rejects the convictions of common sense, and with these gone, the bases of philosophic speculation are undermined.

As we have pointed out, error is both a possibility and a fact. Its possibility lies in the fact that human cognition is an active mental process, and the mind itself, a finite entity. Although knowledge is objective, being effected by extra-mental reality, and although our fundamental and derivative concepts which constitute the terms of our judgments are obtained from reality, not all our judgments of reality are accurate interpretations of it. At times they do not conform to reality; there is a lack of correspondence between the intellect or content of thought and the nature of the object. This want of conformity between the intellect and reality cannot be attributed to the objects; for they determine directly or indirectly the content of thought to which the terms of relation conform. Neither sensations

nor conceptions can be in themselves false. The testimony of our senses in regard to their proper objects is infallible, provided the necessary conditions for the natural action of the faculties in question are present. These conditions are that the sense organ be sound and in a neutral condition; that the object be within due limits of distance, intensity, etc.; and that there be no obstacle between the object and the sense, that is, the medium through which it acts; and that the manner in which it is presented to the sense organ be such as to allow it to produce a sufficient impression on the sense. As all that the senses give us are the external appearances or qualities of things, the appearances cannot of themselves be false; they may, however, be misleading. Provided the conditions named are fulfilled, the senses are trustworthy; otherwise, they are more than likely to lead us into error. Our concepts, being derived from and grounded in the concrete individual data of sense-consciousness, likewise cannot be false under ordinary conditions. This being undeniable, how can we account for error?

As the external material universe is revealed to us by our external senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell—these senses give us the raw materials of our knowledge of reality; and the internal sense of organic touch makes us aware of the conditions of our own bodies. Since the data furnished by these senses constitute the foundation of our knowledge, if any one of these senses functions abnormally, there will be a defect in the datum of this particular experience, which, unless taken cognizance of, will

lead ultimately to a false interpretation of reality. So much by way of introduction to a discussion of the causes of error.

It must be remembered that there are other determinants of the content of thought besides the objective stimulus, among which can be counted imagination, association of ideas, and the "constructive activity of thought." These may be the material causes of error or the occasions of erroneous judgments, which account for the non-conformity between the mental representations and the presented real objects. But the formal cause which accounts for the false objective reference, is the will, desirous of some good, or impatient in doubt. Regarding the first named of the material causes, the "false appearances," that is, the misleading appearances of things, they cannot occur unless irregular conditions exist either in the entities perceived or in the senses perceiving, or in both. By attending, therefore, to the conditions required for a right interpretation of the data presented, the individual knower can forestall or correct his erroneous spontaneous judgments. Some familiar examples of sense illusions are: the color-blind perceiver seeing "red" objects, "gray" or "green"; a person with a diseased palate tasting "sugar," "bitter"; a person in a moving car perceiving trees and houses as "moving"; a "straight" stick partially immersed in water appearing as "bent."

These so-called illusions of the senses are due either to the abnormal functionings of the subjective organic mediums through which the external realities are presented to consciousness, or to an abnor-



mality in the physical external conditions of the objects under perception. In cases such as these, it is necessary to note that the senses themselves neither err nor deceive, because they simply present a datum, an object, to the conscious perceiver. By a careful consideration of the abnormal conditions before passing final judgment, the perceiver can avoid error. Habit, also, is sometimes a cause of error. It is not, however, such in itself, but in its operations; particularly in the field of memory. The cognitive process of purposive inquiry is perhaps one of the most prolific causes of error of those listed under "constructive activity of thought," the others being inference and postulation. That what we will to find, is sometimes what we find in our investigations, cannot be denied. "The wish was father, Harry, to that thought," expresses the influence of the will on assent. Still it affects not the content of thought but the intent of thought, that is, it rather settles what facts are to be admitted as pertaining to the matter in question. Our will to believe does not make that which we believe true. It simply determines our assent to a truth, which exists independently of our belief, which was true before we believed, and which always will be true whether we continue to believe or not. There are various ways in which the will can influence assent, such as undue haste in assenting, anxiety to prove our side the better, inadvertence to the real nature of the data, emotional likes and dislikes, and so forth. In addition to all these causes of error, there may be mentioned one which is very potent, namely, the intellectual and moral environment of the indi-



vidual from infancy. This is a bare outline of the varied causes of erroneous judgments to which the Scholastic philosopher subscribes. He believes that no intellectual function as such can lead us into error, and that in the pursuance of truth, the intellect is supreme, though he admits that its assent may be influenced by human needs and utility.

New Realism also recognizes the existence or rather the "subsistence" of error, and "meets . . . the problem of error by borrowing from logic and mathematics the well-authenticated distinction between reality and being."<sup>24</sup> "The source of error . . . is due to the plurality of causes and to the counter-action of effects. . . . And the more effects we get of a thing, the more nearly adequate is our knowledge of it. If the stick partly immersed in water could affect us only through our eyes, and from only one point of view, we should never discover the error of regarding it as bent. But it affects us from many points of view, and through touch as well as vision, and thus the error of immediate perception is discovered and rendered innocuous. In this way we can test our knowledge and attain ever more and more probability of truth."<sup>25</sup> First, we ask the New Realists, what faculty discovers the "error of immediate perception" in the example given? The Scholastics answer that ultimately it must be the intellect. But as the New Realists have read out of the universe the supra-sensible, they render an answer to our question impossible. It is true, that our knowledge of reality is fractional,

<sup>24</sup> Holt and Others: *New Realism*, p. 360.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

and that the greater number of relations we have with the same object, the more adequate will be our knowledge of it. But in reference to the reason assigned for our discovering the error of the "bent stick," we deny it; for it is by experience that we know the external conditions in which a straight stick looks bent. Hence it is by means of the sense of touch that we either verify our judgment or interpretation of the datum presented by the sense of sight, or prove—as in this case—that our judgment is at variance with reality. The sense of sight reported the datum, "the stick," according to the condition, "immersion in water," and it could not do otherwise. But this stick in water is not a strictly normal case, for we do not ordinarily perceive things in water; therefore we should take into account this peculiar circumstance before passing judgment on the form of the stick. The New Realists' treatment of illusions throws little light on the nature of error. To them it is as good a fact as any reality, and their whole interest and aim in considering errors is to prove that they in no way argue for the "subjective." If the New Realists hope to explain error, they must admit the psychical or subjective world, a world as real and existent as their "outer" world.

That Professor Perry finds it difficult to explain the nature of error is evident from this passage: "Truth and error both involve an objective. . . . Moreover, the presence of this objective factor in error would seem to belie its supposed erroneousness. . . . In order even to believe erroneously I must believe something. There must be something for me to believe. That which I believe is what I be-

lieve it to be. Then how am I in error?"<sup>26</sup> His difficulty arises from the false assumption that *that about which* I have a belief and *that which* I believe are identical. Error does not consist in a mere isolated existence of a "proposition" in the "mind," but in the fallacious reference of the content of the judgment to the real extra-mental object about which I have the belief. It is impossible for the New Realists to overcome this difficulty and explain the nature of truth and of error until they relinquish not only this false assumption, but also the others to which we have drawn the reader's attention. Again we find New Realism rejecting a dictate of common sense; for the everyday person believes that the objects about which he forms judgments, which are either true or false, are really distinct from and not numerically one with his interpretation of them.

After many elaborate and, as seem to us, inconclusive arguments that do not enable him to explain error, Professor Holt with apparent satisfaction says, "The errors in knowledge are, then, the presence in the knowledge-system of propositions that contradict each other; and such a situation calls for no special explanation, because it is found in most manifolds that contain propositions. . . . It may be asked if knowledge of space and time is a cross-section thereof, whence may come any parts of knowledge that do not truly correspond thereto? They come, not indeed from space and time, but from the general realm of being, for the knowledge-system as a whole is a system that intersects not

<sup>26</sup> *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XIII, p. 569.

merely space and time but all being. There must be, however, no spatial reference in the 'whence come,' for being is not a merely spatial manifold; to ask whence comes or whither goes in a spatial sense, the false idea or indeed the true, fancy or fact, is to ask whither and whence about motion that has ceased, the contour of the clouds, the momentary shape of waves. . . . But in general, propositions are in any system that contains in any wise logical change, for instance, any logical variable; and they may be recognized because such a manifold cannot be defined without the use of propositions or some sort of functions. While too it seems fantastic to speak of the nervous system as responding to propositions . . . yet the sort of active entity that the word 'proposition' means is integrally contained in the manifold responded to by the nervous system if this manifold can be logically defined only by propositions or equations (functions)." <sup>27</sup> We do not find in Professor Holt's epitomized account of truth and error any real enlightenment, but rather a fruitless attempt to solve the problem.

Discarding at the very beginning of their philosophical speculations the process of introspection as a means of knowing the mental content, the New Realists are in no position to confirm our spontaneous conviction that it is of the nature of mind to get a genuine knowledge of reality as it is. And without introspection St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest exponent of the philosophy of reasoned common sense, insists that we cannot have a rea-

<sup>27</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, pp. 279-281.

soned and certain knowledge of truth. "We have certain knowledge of the truth," he says, "inasmuch as (1) we attain to truth by an act of the intellect, and (2) we know that we do so. We attain to truth by an operation of the intellect inasmuch as the judgment of the intellect gives us an insight into reality as it is. And we know that it does so by reflecting on that operation and seeing not merely that the judgment is formed, but that it is conformed to the reality. But to see that the conformity is there we must understand the nature of the act of judgment; which in turn can be known only by knowing the nature of the principle whence it springs; and this principle is the intellect itself, the nature of which is to conform itself to reality. Hence the intellect knows that it possesses truth by reflecting on itself." <sup>22</sup>

Hence the conclusion would seem inevitable that New Realism in maintaining that reality, which is ever self-identical, is at the same time subject and object, thought and thing, mind and nature, has rendered itself incapable of giving any rational explanation of truth and error.

<sup>22</sup> *De Veritate*, I, 9.

## CHAPTER X

### NEW REALISM: PSYCHOLOGICO-ETHICAL ASPECTS

Before terminating our study of New Realism, it is necessary to give some attention to its psychological and ethical implications. For since the adequate object of philosophy is the sum total of reality, none of its problems can be solved independently of the others. The solution of any one will, in some measure at least, necessarily be bound up with that of all the rest. In order then to estimate justly the worth of New Realism's solution of the knowledge problem we shall examine in a general way its attitude toward the traditional doctrines of substantiality, spirituality, and immortality of the soul, freedom of the will, and of morality—truths of the highest importance in the conduct of rational life.

As has already appeared in our investigation of the objective conditions of knowledge or the knowable universe, the New Realists maintain that a real, external, material world exists independently of any "knowing mind" and that it is unmodified when known. The physical world revealed to us in human experience is manifold; its component individual objects, though distinct, are ultimately the same in nature. From man then, down to the simplest inorganic



entity there is a difference not in kind, but only in degree of complexity. Every individual entity is a mere quality-group differentiated from the individuals of other classes by the property of "specificity," a resultant of the peculiar synthesis of the qualities. In their assumption that the entities of the universe are complexes or quality-groups, the New Realists affirm accidents to be the only existents, and thereby read out of the universe the category, substance. Their monistic and materialistic conception of the nature of things denies implicitly the polaric distinction between the material and the spiritual. Thus violence is done to the belief of the everyday person that the world is made up of these two radically distinct entities; that there are two principles in reality which he exemplifies by distinguishing in himself the two coefficients—his body, the material element, and his soul, the immaterial element. What must logically follow from this translation of the whole universe exclusively in terms of a physical reality? And in particular, what effect has it on man?

If man is nothing more than a group of qualities or accidents—a supposition which is not only inconceivable but unimaginable as well—and these material qualities are related by a special arrangement, his one and only constitutive principle, we must necessarily conclude that man is incapable of any supra-sensuous activity, and that his end, like that of all the other less complex quality-groups, is co-terminous with the cessation of life. By denying the existence of the soul, the immaterial principle, the New Realists render man incapable of intellec-

tual activity or rational thought—such as reasoning proper, judgment, and intellectual ideas—and of free choice. Being inorganic functions their source cannot be a material principle, as we have proved in a previous chapter. Moreover, this denial of the immaterial principle in man makes it impossible for the New Realists to explain that splendid vision and the yearning for a “something” which we do not possess that arises within us on the perception, for instance, of the glories of a woodland scene on an early summer morning; an experience such as Amiel, the poet and essayist, describes in these lines: “These mornings impress me indescribably. They intoxicate me, they carry me away. I feel beguiled out of myself, dissolved in sunbeams, breezes, perfumes and sudden impulses of joy. And yet all the time I pine for I know not what intangible Eden.” Nor can the New Realists account for the aspirations and struggles for the attainment of ideals. Were man a mere complex machine, an utterance such as the following, which has been felt and expressed in a hundred different ways, would never even be actuated. And to our surprise it is quoted by Hegel in a letter to Schelling. “Strive upwards to the sun, my friend, that the salvation of humanity may soon be ripe! What matter for the hindering leaves and branches! struggle through to the sun, and if you grow weary, never mind! You will sleep all the better!”<sup>1</sup>

Again, how explain without the spiritual element in man, the rapturous admiration aroused in us

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bosanquet in *Contemporary Philosophy*, pp. 183, 184.

when in the presence of the masterpieces of creative art? Surely, the New Realists must admit that the products of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Newman, Michelangelo, Fra Angelico, Murillo, Rubens, Van Dyck, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci, are but the material expressions of their ideals and aspirations; and that it is not the mere observation of printed words, nor of the chiseled marble, nor of the chemical composition of the pigments, but the comprehension of their beauty by a spiritual faculty, the intellect, that calls forth the æsthetic enjoyment. If man is wholly material then for him a knowledge of God—the Beginning and End of his life—cannot be had. What an earth-anchored being man is in the world of the New Realists! Indeed, their materialistic conception of man paralyzes and renders inactive the hope of and the endeavor for a more glorious future of mankind.

Furthermore, if man is wholly material, then he is corruptible; for an extended body consists of extraposed parts and is therefore of its nature resolvable into its constituents. But this conclusion contradicts a morally universal verdict of the human race. Men of every age, of every race, amid an infinite variety of ideals and customs, have declared their belief in survival after death. Only an abuse of reason or a refusal to submit to its dictates has led man to hold a contrary belief. We find Cicero, the best known representative of Roman Eclecticism, in the first century of the Christian era, expressing the universal conviction of immortality. "There is," he wrote, "I know not how, in the minds of men a certain presage, as it were, of a future exist-

ence; and this takes the deepest root and is most easily discernible in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls." And Addison, the English literary classicist, eloquently expressed, through Cato, the same conviction.

"It must be so . . .

Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality?  
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror,  
Of falling into naught? why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?  
'Tis the Divinity, that stirs within us;  
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,  
And intimates eternity to man.  
Eternity! thou pleasing, dreadful thought,  
Through what variety of untried being,  
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!  
The wide, th' unbounded prospect, lies before me;  
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it.  
Here will I hold. . . .  
The soul, secured in her existence, smiles  
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.  
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements."<sup>2</sup>

The New Realists, then, because of their monistic and materialistic conception of the metaphysical conditions of the knowledge problem, that is, the nature of reality and in particular of man, the intellectual knower of the physical universe, implicitly deny some of the spontaneous and natural beliefs and convictions of common sense. In consequence

<sup>2</sup> *Cato*, Act V, Sc. I, The Works of Addison, Vol. III, p. 497.

of its gratuitous assumptions, the implications of which run counter to the natural tendencies of the human mind, New Realism, as we have proved, is rendered incapable of even framing, much less of answering two questions that are of the gravest importance to human life: Is man's soul immortal? and, Is there a Supreme Being? Questions, the answers to which, as no sane person can deny, will affect seriously, not only the affairs of man as an individual, but his relations with mankind in general.

The view we take of nature as a whole determines fundamentally our conceptions of freedom and morality. Hence it is obvious that if we explain all reality exclusively in terms of mechanical laws, that is, if the events both of the physical world and of man's mental and moral life are governed alike by the laws of nature, we reveal ourselves as determinists, and freedom can have no place in our discussions. Now the New Realists accept Mechanism, the theory opposing Vitalism, as the only reasonable explanation of all reality. Professor Marvin writes: "Vitalism as a positive doctrine and vitalism even as a mere negative doctrine are interesting also psychologically. Animism is clearly 'a call of the wild' . . . the very fact that the vitalist does more than reserve his judgment is psychologically suspicious. It is evidence not merely that he does not want science to succeed but also that he wants something positive. He wants life to be genuinely creative, that is, to possess powers which are inconsistent with the principles of physical science. He wants life to be indeterministic and mysterious. He wants the world to contain creative teleological agents; for such a world



seems more in tune with the heart of man. In short he wants the religion of romanticism. . . . In contrast; the mechanist also has a religion, but a different religion. He wants the world to prove simple, explicable, and manageable. He wants man to be lord of creation and master of his destiny. He wants man to be self-sufficient, self-controlled and morally the ultimate jury. For him, man's supreme enterprise is civilization, justice and enlightenment. . . . If we want civilization, if we want man to depend upon his skill rather than upon hypnosis, we must encourage him to try to understand his environment and himself and to learn how to control himself and his environment. If we want enlightenment we must encourage experimental research and the belief in determinism which it presupposes, we must encourage men to believe in a logical world. If we want man to be master of his destiny, we must preach the religion of effort, and of self-confidence. However, if we want the life of the vagabond, the adventurer, or the quitter, or if we want peace and rest; then we need a philosophy which leaves open as a credible religion that of animism, magic and hypnosis."\*

This is indeed a specious plea, a splendid example of the *argumentum ad hominem*. But, we ask, How can man be "lord of creation and master of his destiny" when he comes under the same laws that govern lifeless matter? In nowise can Mechanism account for man's power over his actions and his innumerable conquests over the world; for the distinctive characteristic of mechanistic processes is

\* *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 625-627.



that the course of events in the sequence is rigidly determined. How, then, can man control himself and the physical universe if he is capable of only determinate activity? Although New Realism recognizes the genuine efficacy of purpose, it refuses to admit an immaterial factor outside the material system. It attempts to effect a naturalization of teleology by providing a mechanistic formula for a teleological process.

Professor Holt likewise puzzles us by saying: "Now the inscrutable 'thought behind' the actions of man, which is the invisible secret of his actions, is another myth, like the myth of the nature gods and the *vis viva*. . . . 'Myth' is the accepted term," he says, "to apply to an entity which is believed in, but which eludes empirical enquiry." <sup>4</sup> In a paper, *Purpose As Tendency and Adaptation*, Professor Perry points out that ". . . the difference between mechanism and purpose turns out to be nothing more than the difference of sense in the causal relation; the two are complementary aspects of a temporal system determined by law. . . . A first system, the organism, acts upon a second system or group of systems, called the environment, so as to recover and maintain a constant state. We suppose a certain initial or moral state of the first system; and find that when, owing to either internal or external causes, this state is altered, certain compensatory changes arise within the system itself which restore the normal state. . . . Let us see what this conception implies. In the first place, it is implied

<sup>4</sup> *The Freudian Wish*, pp. 85, 158.

that the action of the environment is determined independently of the organism. . . . In the second place, it is implied that the organism contains a reserve of energy, which the action of the environment releases. The action or response of the organism consists of the more or less 'spontaneous' changes conditioned mainly by the potentialities of the organism itself; and these will bear no constant quantitative relation to the amount of the stimulus. Finally, it is implied that this response of the organism is constant in a certain peculiar respect. . . . The responses of the adapted system vary with the action of the environment according to some constant rule . . . the independent variable is the environmental action, the dependent variable is the organic response, while the outcome or resultant is constant. . . . The organism may be said to be adapted to the environment in respect of that constant result. But it is not significant to say that the response occurs *because of* that result. Given the constant result as a law, the response occurs because of the stimulus. . . . But it cannot be said of the organism that it so behaves as to *bring this law into operation.*"<sup>5</sup>

The objectivity of purposes and the absolute determination of man by the stimulus without are both pronounced facts of New Realism, as Professor Perry's statements express. Under purposes, Professor Holt includes volitions, desires, and wishes. And he contends that "purposes are no more essentially private to individual minds than any other

<sup>5</sup> *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 478-495.

neutral entity: and it is merely an apparent distinction between these and physical laws.”<sup>6</sup> In proof of this he says, “Now if we examine candidly any human purpose, we shall see that it is nothing other than just such a generative law. . . . It is, for instance, my desire to walk along the edge of a cliff, keeping near enough to the edge so as to see the surf below and far enough from it so as to run no danger of falling over. . . . This purpose is at once then the law of my movements; it generates them and is itself their sole unity.”<sup>7</sup> We admit the truth of this description as to the real influence of purposes on our behavior but deny their objectivity; for we, including the “I” in the example, unlike other classes of individuals are conscious of the purpose which directs our steps along the edge of the cliff, and this purpose is subjective.

Since the New Realists banish from the world the soul, that is, the immaterial principle in man, as we understand the term, it is not at all surprising to find Professor Holt urging that “A purpose or volition is then nothing at all mysteriously subjective, and it is a law of the same type as is found in the neutral realm logically antecedent to either matter or mind.”<sup>8</sup> And again, “. . . volitions are impersonal, neutral formulæ, and are in no wise inscrutable or sacred to the ‘subjective’ realm.”<sup>9</sup> The impersonality of purpose is again reiterated in this passage, “A volition is a law, a genetic formula, and is statable, discutable, and open to the gaze of all who care to take cognizance of it. . . . The will is

<sup>6</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, pp. 303, 304.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

as much and as little free as is nature.”<sup>10</sup> Just when is man free? we ask the New Realists. And we find in Professor Holt’s writings this unsatisfactory explanation: “That man is free whose acts fulfill his purposes:—this is ‘practical freedom,’ and such a man has ‘the innate sense of being practically free.’ ”<sup>11</sup> Anticipating any further inquiry as to the origin of purposes, he continues: “The question whence come his purposes is as irrelevant and meaningless as some others that we have seen;—whither go the shapes of bursting bubbles? If a purpose is his purpose and if his acts fulfill it, he is free.”<sup>12</sup> What a dogmatic and utterly inadequate explanation of so paramount a concept in human affairs!

From these passages, it is undeniable that the New Realists are incapable of giving an intelligible explanation of moral freedom; for any universal mechanical theory is incompatible and essentially irreconcilable with the rational faculty, free will, which the everyday man presupposes in the belief that he is free. By freedom of will we mean that man is capable of determining his own actions, that he is not determined in his choice by any mechanical law. Our conscious introspection demonstrates that voluntary choice is not mechanistically determined; and a study of the adaptive character of our behavior proves the impossibility of describing it fully in mechanistic terms. Our voluntary acts are initiated by us according to the laws peculiar to the nature of self. That we are the true causes of our voluntary acts is attested to by the fact that not

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 291, 304. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 295, 296.

only do we, but all other men as well, live and act as free beings. We are ready to admit that many of our actions are indeliberate, and that education, character, heredity, and environment influence our actions; but we deny that all our actions are beyond our control, that their initiation and determination come from an external cause. Suppose we are offered a trip to Europe, what takes place before a decision is made? We first attend to the "trip to Europe," then weigh the reasons for and against taking the trip, and finally come to the conclusion that to accept the trip is preferable. What a waste of time and energy, if all that is necessary is the release of a "reserve energy" by the "action of the environment"—in this case the offer of a trip to Europe—the release being "more or less spontaneous" according to the "potentialities of the organism." Could any account of the free voluntary actions of man be more bizarre and ridiculous!

By making the mechanical laws of nature explanatory of the actions of man, New Realism aligns itself with determinism as our examination disclosed. If man is not free, then there is no morality, and were the New Realists consistent they would not speak of ethics. Yet, we find Professor Perry writing: "Realism is individualistic, democratic and humanitarian in its ethics. . . . Realism is essentially a philosophy which refuses to deceive or console itself by comfortable illusions. It prefers to keep its eyes open. But it is neither cynical nor embittered. It distinguishes the good from the evil, and seeks to promote it, not with a sense of assured triumph, but rather with the confidence that springs from



resolution.”<sup>12</sup> We are curious to know who the “who” is that discriminates between the good and the evil. Surely, it must be clear to the reader that New Realism’s attempt to discuss morality is futile. Moreover, how can the ethics of New Realism be “individualistic” when it denies personal experiences and purposes to man? In order that actions be moral, they must not be conditioned exclusively by the laws governing the material world, nor by quantitative purpose, but must be caused by the self. Now the final cause of actions is simply an abstract representation of a purpose which is to be attained, and it cannot without prejudice be denied.

To us, all moral ideas in New Realism must be illusive, for its world is wholly material. Since the right and wrong of acts have no meaning except in reference to an end, until that end is fixed, no true conception of moral righteousness can be attained. Now, God is the ultimate basis of morality,—reason, the proximate. New Realism, having no spiritual entity in its world, is therefore incapable of attaining a correct notion of moral ideas. Obligation, remorse, repentance, merit, and demerit, are moral concepts which are universal to the race; and yet New Realism, because of its materialistic conception of reality, must ultimately deny them. Again we find the New Realists, due to their gratuitous and suicidal assumptions, implicitly denying elementary and fundamental ethical convictions, or “principles of the moral order.” They can in no way logically justify the retention of them, as there is no moral being in their world.

<sup>12</sup> *The Present Conflict of Ideals*, pp. 379, 380.



## CHAPTER XI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Are the findings of New Realism, then, worthless? If so, wherein lies the value of its contribution to the philosophical world? It might seem from our positive declarations and conclusive proofs against its arguments that New Realism has nothing to its credit. But such is not the case. It has been our endeavor to conduct our critical study of New Realism's solution to the knowledge problem with an open mind, desirous of discovering the reason or reasons for its claim to recognition "in the main current of thought," and its right to its name, and above all to estimate its originality and plausibility.

What have been our discoveries? In its insistence against Idealism that the direct objects of our sense-awareness are physical objects independent in nature and existence of the perceiver, and unmodified when known, New Realism is to be commended, inasmuch as it has rendered invaluable service in saving a mind-independent universe. But in its zeal to maintain this thesis it has fallen into pernicious and very serious defects. It is not an exaggeration to say that the New Realists present a theory of knowledge, which is, if not wholly, then in greater part at variance with the dictates of common sense. Assuming

the essence of man, the knower of the world, as homogeneous with his physical environment. New Realism confronts itself not with a difficulty but with an impossibility, which no amount of fanciful ingenuity or flippant dubbing of the human soul can eliminate. That there are two principles in man and in the universe is a fact; and facts are of such a nature that they remain despite all the arguments arraigned against their existence. Adopting the experimental method as the one proper to philosophy as well as to science, and applying it to an analysis of all reality, the New Realists feel triumphant in the fact that no soul has yet been discovered in the empirical field. Hence they contend it does not exist, forgetting that the finding of it by means of the microscope or in any other like fashion would necessitate its being a material entity. To us, it seems an erroneous process of thought and unreasonable to give up everything which cannot be demonstrated by such methods. More than once in our discussion we have adverted to the fact that the New Realists made a fundamental mistake when they repudiated the method of introspection; for it alone is the instrument that can discover the existence of an immaterial principle in man, the objective method being a useful supplement to it. Their teaching that the soul is an unnecessary mysterious entity in man, is precisely what renders them powerless to give an intelligible description of the knowing process, and accounts alike for their failure to explain truth and error, for their psychological behaviorism, and for their implicit denial of all supra-sensuous concepts, religious and moral.

It is beyond dispute that New Realism has a just claim to its name, Realism; for it maintains the existence of a real mind-independent world, and respects the objective value of the truths of logic. The claim is, however, singularly bold and original, bold by reason of its whimsical attack on the existence of the soul; and original by reason of its super-material sphere of logical and mathematical manifolds, errors, and evil, by which it hoped to escape the charge of being another form of materialism. It is right here that the influence of Plato is detected. New Realism's conception of consciousness as an "illuminated cross-section of the universe" also entitles it to originality. But as a theory of knowledge it stands self-condemned; for it is both monistic and materialistic. With the former characterization Professor Holt himself agrees, for he says, "Our theory is a strictly monistic one";<sup>1</sup> but he repudiates materialism in these words: "It is nothing worse than mere materialism. . . . It was partly in order to forestall the charge of 'Materialism' that the foregoing ontological considerations have been presented."<sup>2</sup> Although the New Realists disavow any connection with the materialists, they are such, nevertheless, and their postulation of a world of neutral subsistents does in nowise negative our contention. For this "superfluous luxury," which has no local habitation, but is nowhere, is not the norm for evaluating their solution of the knowledge problem; it is rather their interpretation of reality. Their positive declarations that differences in indi-

<sup>1</sup> *The Concept of Consciousness*, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 168.

viduals are of degree and not of kind, reduces everything to the same material nature; and as there is no phase of mind, no conscious state and content that cannot be expressed in objective terms, they, by identifying consciousness with the thing known, put themselves with the materialists.

New Realism's solution of the knowledge problem is obviously futile. It has failed to formulate an objective definition of mind which it set out to do. Considering mind the selective responsive principle which carves as it were the objects from the rest, the New Realists proceed to identify this selective principle with the objects selected. Surely just a little reflection tells us that the selective principle must be independent of that which it selects. Consequently for New Realism mind is in the open field of observation, and may be read in man's bodily activities, or in the objects to which the nervous organism responds. Its teachings accord, therefore, with the tendencies of the times, which may be enumerated as the adoration of the public and the commendation of the group, the desire for the equal footing of all men, and the mad endeavor to shut out the suprasensuous world from the lives of men. For with the New Realists everything is open to the gaze of the public, no being is superior to another, since every individual is ultimately the same in nature. And as man has no spiritual constitutive principle, he is of the "earth earthly," and therefore incapable of the inspirations and aspirations that accompany and result from the thought that he is made for higher things—things which speak of religious and moral ideals, immortality, and God. The fol-

lowing description of the lot of man in materialistic philosophy will serve perhaps to give a more vivid picture of the hopeless state of man in New Realism when its implications are expressed: "Man, so far as natural science by itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the Heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. . . . We survey the past, and see that its [the race's] history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period . . . the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. . . . 'Imperishable monuments' and 'immortal deeds,' death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been. Nor will anything that is be better or be worse for all the labor, genius, devotion, and suffering of man have striven through countless ages to effect." \*

New Realism, moreover, fails to return to Naïve Realism, the goal set by itself; for as we have pointed out at different times, it cut loose from the deliverances of common sense at the very beginning of its solution of the knowledge problem.

Judged by the principles of Scholasticism, New Realism in its theory of knowledge, shows itself, as we have proved, a Materialistic Monism encom-

\* Balfour: *Foundations of Belief*, pp. 29-31.

passed by all the insoluble difficulties that come with the reduction of reality to a unitary principle. Being such in nature it failed to explain the essence of knowledge except by way of caricature. Neither reasoned common sense nor the practical effects of New Realism itself will permit us to accept it. For with human personality valueless and spiritual forces gone from the universe, what objective value is there for man? Love, the most wonderful of all the manifestations of spirituality when its object is carefully chosen, is an illusion. Love, Christian love—all-embracing, unselfish, self-sacrificing—the maker of the heroes of a nation and of the world, must of necessity be an empty name to consistent materialistic philosophers; and to the inconsistent, an inexplicable phenomenon. Whereas for Scholasticism, which is dualistic and spiritualistic, this powerful lever is in the world, a tremendous reality moving men onward and upward to the God of Love.





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